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ABSTRACT

The progress made by adults in dedicated mainstream basic skills provision in England and Wales and factors associated with students' progress were examined. Of the 2,135 students from 71 colleges of further education and local education authorities who took the reading pretest, 1,224 (57%) took the reading posttest. Writing scripts were received from 1,724 students at pretest and 937 (54%) at posttest. Background data were collected on the students, and 177 adult literacy tutors completed a questionnaire. Students achieved small but statistically significant improvements in reading and very small but statistically significant improvements in writing. Students' writing improved only in terms of length of script and quality of handwriting--not in terms of reduction of errors or increase in complexity. Students' writing skills were generally much poorer than their reading skills. No factors associated with differential progress in writing were found. The following factors appeared linked to differential progress in reading: regular attendance, all tutors in an area having qualified teacher status, and tutors having help in the classroom. Nine recommendations were presented. (Sixty-one tables/figures and 22 references are included. The following items are appended: descriptions of the study methodology and method used to devise the reading tests, the student profile instrument, and the tutor questionnaire.) (MN)

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Do Learners Learn?

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The Basic Skills Agency

Progress in Adult Literacy

Do learners learn?

Greg Brooks, Rachael Davies, Laura Duckett,
Dougal Hutchison, Sally Kendall, Anne Wilkin

The Basic Skills Agency

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Contents

List of Figures vii

List of Tables viii

Members of the Project Team – Authorship xi

Acknowledgements xii

Foreword xiii

Executive Summary 1

Chapter 1: Context, Aims and Outline of the Study 7

1.1 Context 7

1.2 Aims 8

1.3 Outline of how the study was carried out 9

1.4 Structure of this report 11

Chapter 2: Previous national studies of progress in adult literacy 12

2.1 Previous national studies of progress in adult literacy in Britain 12

2.1.1 Jones and Charnley (1978) 12

2.1.2 Gorman and Moss (1979) 13

2.1.3 Abell (1992) 14

2.2 Previous national studies of progress in adult literacy in the United States 15

2.3 Summary 17

Chapter 3: Adult literacy teachers and teaching in England and Wales 18

3.1 Introduction 18

3.2 Tutors' background 18

3.2.1 Gender 18

3.2.2 Qualifications 19

3.2.3 Teaching experience 19

3.3 The tutors' current basic skills teaching in general 20
3.3.1 Working hours, overall 20
3.3.2 Hours teaching tested group 21
3.3.3 Size of teaching groups 22

3.4 Professional development 23

3.5 Management support 25

3.6 Assistance with teaching 26

3.7 Planning 28
3.7.1 Meetings 28
3.7.2 Curricula and schemes of work 28
3.7.3 Sources of information for planning 29
3.7.4 Planning students' progression in learning 30

3.8 Teaching and learning in general 31
3.8.1 Modes of teaching 31
3.8.2 Content of schemes of work 32
3.8.3 Factors contributing to students' progress 32

3.9 The tutors' current adult literacy teaching in particular 35
3.9.1 Access to IT 35
3.9.2 Teaching materials 35

3.10 Assessment 37
3.10.1 Co-ordination of record-keeping 37
3.10.2 Students' goals 37
3.10.3 Assessment of progress 38

3.11 Summary 38

Chapter 4: What were the students like? 40
4.1 Characteristics of the sample 40

4.2 Hours of tuition 47

4.3 Comparisons with school-level attainment 47

4.4 Information from the tutor questionnaire 50
4.4.1 Students' literacy levels 50
4.4.2 Other literacy tuition received by tested group 50

4.5 Summary 51

Chapter 5: How much progress did the students make? 52

5.1 Reading – norm-referenced results 52

5.2 Reading – criterion-referenced results 52

5.3 Comparisons with school-level results and tutors' judgements 56

5.4 Movement between levels 57

5.5 What could students at each reading level do? 59

5.6 Results for writing 63

5.7 Relationship between reading and writing results 65

5.8 Summary 65

Chapter 6: What factors were associated with progress? 67

6.1 Few factors were discovered 67

6.2 Reading results against background variables, full sample 67

6.3 Writing results against background variables 69

6.4 Reading and writing results by hours of tuition 71

6.5 Reading results against tutor questionnaire variables 72

6.6 Insights from interviews with basic skills co-ordinators 74

6.7 Summary 75

Chapter 7: Summary and recommendations 77

7.1 Background, aims and method 77

7.2 Previous studies 78

7.3 Adult literacy teachers and teaching 78

7.4 The students 79

7.5 The findings on students' progress 79

7.6 Factors associated with progress 81

7.7 Recommendations 81

References 83

Appendices

Appendix A:	How the study was carried out – full description		85
A.1	Coverage		85
A.2	Instruments for assessing students' progress		86
	A.2.1	Reading	86
	A.2.2	Writing	86
A.3	Background instruments		86
	A.3.1	Student Profile	86
	A.3.2	Hours of tuition form	87
	A.3.3	Tutor questionnaire	87
A.4	Qualitative data		87
A.5	Test scoring and data analysis		87
A.6	Sampling		88
A.7	Period of testing		89
A.8	Amounts of data collected		89
A.9	Representativeness of post-test samples		90
Appendix B:	How the reading tests were devised		95
B.1	Reporting requirements		95
B.2	Norm-referenced items		96
B.3	Comparison with school-level performance		97
B.4	Criterion-referenced items		97
B.5	Compiling the test forms		98
B.6	Methods of test administration		98
Appendix C:	Student Profile		100
Appendix D:	Tutor Questionnaire		102
Appendix E:	How the reading data were analysed		114
E.1	Norm-referenced data		114
E.2	Criterion-referenced data		121
Appendix F:	How the writing samples were analysed		123

List of figures

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 Comparative performance of adults and 9-year-olds on IEA Reading Literacy Study tasks 49

Chapter 5

Figure 5.1 Pre- and Post-test criterion-referenced reading results compared with national (IALS) distribution 56

Appendix B

Figure B.1 Structure of the reading tests 98

List of tables

Chapter 2

Table 2.1 Numbers of students pre- and post-tested in 1976-79 adult literacy study in England 13

Table 2.2 Results of 1976-79 adult literacy study in England 14

Chapter 3

Table 3.1 Tutors' formal educational qualifications 19

Table 3.2 Tutors' teaching experience, in years 20

Table 3.3 Tutors' teaching hours, overall and in adult literacy 21

Table 3.4 Numbers of hours per week tutors taught provision visited by NFER fieldworker 22

Table 3.5 Average size of adult literacy groups taught 22

Table 3.6 Areas covered in professional development, 1996-99 23

Table 3.7 Categories of publication on literacy teaching read most recently 24

Table 3.8 Tutors' familiarity with particular author's work on literacy 25

Table 3.9 Types of support received by tutors from line managers 26

Table 3.10 Average frequency over a term of assistance in class 27

Table 3.11 Aspects of work supported by helpers 27

Table 3.12 Frequency of formal and informal meetings 28

Table 3.13 Basis of tutors' adult literacy curricula and schemes of work 29

Table 3.14 Sources relied on in planning adult literacy provision 30

Table 3.15 Weight given by tutors to various forms of evidence in planning their students progression in learning 31

Table 3.16 Approximate proportion of time in adult literacy classes occupied by different modes of teaching 32

Table 3.17 Frequency of inclusion of items in scheme of work 33

Table 3.18 Perceived importance of various factors in making progress 34

Table 3.19 Published materials used by tutors 35

Table 3.20 Self-devised materials used by tutors 36

Table 3.21	Percentages of time based on published and tutor-devised materials	36
Table 3.22	Numbers of students working towards different goals	37
Table 3.23	Weight given by tutors to various forms of evidence in assessment	38

Chapter 4

Table 4.1	Characteristics of the sample of students	40
Table 4.2	Distribution of hours of tuition between pre- and post-test	47
Table 4.3	Comparative performance of adults and 9-year-olds on IEA Reading Literacy Study tasks	48
Table 4.4	Numbers of students judged by tutors to be at different levels of Communication Standards	50

Chapter 5

Table 5.1	Norm-referenced reading results	52
Table 5.2	Criterion-referenced reading results, full sample	54
Table 5.3	Criterion-referenced reading results, intensive students	54
Table 5.4	Numbers of students who moved ±12.5 IALS points or stayed within that range	58
Table 5.5	Numbers of students who moved between levels of the New Standards or stayed at the same level, full sample	58
Table 5.6	Numbers of students who moved between levels of the New Standards or stayed at the same level, intensive students	59
Table 5.7	What students at each level had an 80 per cent probability of being able to do	60
Table 5.8	Writing results: length of script, full sample	64
Table 5.9	Writing results: quality of handwriting, full sample	65

Chapter 6

Table 6.1	Norm-referenced reading results against background variables, full sample	68
Table 6.2	Writing (length of script) results against background variables, full sample	70
Table 6.3	Norm-referenced reading results against hours of tuition, full sample	71
Table 6.4	Writing (length of script) results against hours of tuition, full sample	71

Table 6.5	Items from tutor questionnaire which yielded non-significant results against reading gains	73
Table 6.6	Reading gains by proportion of tutors with classroom support	74
Table 6.7	Reading gains by whether all tutors had QTS or not	74

Appendix A

Table A.1	Numbers of students attending literacy and literacy and numeracy provision in England and Wales in 1996/97, by sector	85
Table A.2	Numbers of providers participating, by sector	89
Table A.3	Numbers of students on whom data were gathered	90
Table A.4	Comparison of reading test returners with whole pre-test sample by distribution of pre-test scores within IALS levels	91
Table A.5	Comparison of reading test returners with whole pre-test sample by background characteristics	91

Appendix E

Table E.1	Number of items available for equating with IALS	114
Table E.2	'Prose' items in 'A' tests	117
Table E.3	'Document' items in 'A' tests	118
Table E.4	'Prose' items in 'B' tests	119
Table E.5	'Document' items in 'B' tests	120
Table E.6	Alignment of IALS levels and new Basic Skills Standards	121
Table E.7	IALS levels and score ranges, and New Standards levels	122
Table E.8	Comparison of levels in various qualifications framework	122

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Dougal Hutchison wrote section E.1 and did all the statistical analyses, including the highly complex equating of this project's results with IALS.

Sally Kendall and *Ann Wilkin* co-ordinated all the fieldwork in the northern half of England, did a great deal of the fieldwork in that area, marked some of the writing scripts, and trained the principal marker of the scripts.

The rest of the report was the work of *Greg Brooks*.

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Foreword

Although there have been adult literacy programmes for many years, we know surprisingly little about whether adults do improve these crucial literacy skills in such programmes. There was a national study when adult literacy provision expanded in the mid-1970s but there has been little since. Furthermore, there have been few reliable studies of learner progress in other countries, even in the United States.

The NFER research in the mid-1970s suggested that about 25% of learners made significant progress, 50% made only very modest progress and 25% 'stood still'. (So many adults had 'dropped out' by the time the research was completed that there's some doubt about the reliability of the results.) It would be encouraging to report that this recent NFER study showed many more adults making substantial progress and far fewer 'standing still'. It would be encouraging but it wouldn't be true.

This research suggests that most adults make modest yet worthwhile progress in reading. On the other hand most don't appear to make any measurable progress in writing, particularly in terms of improved spelling and punctuation, yet a well written and correctly spelled application is often the difference between getting a job and remaining unemployed.

Of course, there are plenty of reasons why progress has been so modest. Most adults get only a few hours of teaching a week. Provision has been poorly funded and has usually been seen as a 'Cinderella' service of low priority. Just as importantly the adults in literacy courses failed to master these essential skills in school and require skilled teaching if they're to master them later in life.

However, it's no good bemoaning the lack of priority given in the past or the very limited access to training most teachers of literacy to adults have had. What we need to do is make sure that the new government adult basic skills strategy is so effective that any adult joining a literacy course is guaranteed to make good progress. Such good progress that they will not need similar help in future. If we can meet this challenge, a future research report on progress will be a real cause for celebration.

Alan Wells
Director, Basic Skills Agency

Executive Summary

PRINCIPAL FINDING

- **Adults in dedicated mainstream basic skills provision in England and Wales made undramatic but worthwhile progress in both reading and writing.**
- **At pre-test, just under half the sample had reading scores below a functional level.**
- **Many students seemed to have distinctly poorer writing than reading skills.**
- **No factors associated with differential progress in reading were found, and only three factors associated with differential progress in reading: regular attendance, all tutors in an area having qualified teacher status, and tutors having help in the classroom.**

Method

- The Basic Skills Agency commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to investigate the progress in literacy made by adults in dedicated mainstream basic skills provision in England and Wales, and factors associated with that progress.
- The study began in early 1998, and lasted two years.
- Thus it began before, but was completed after, the publication of the Moser Report.
- A set of reading tests was compiled from items used in previous studies. The items were chosen, and the tests designed, to provide three forms of national data: norm-referenced results against a national distribution, criterion-referenced results against a set of basic skills standards, and comparisons with school-level performance.
- Two main reading test forms were devised. Half the sample (randomly assigned) took each form at pre-test, and the other form at post-test. A complex and innovative statistical process was used to equate the test forms. The tests made literacy demands which could be considered largely functional.
- One-sentence writing prompts were also used at pre- and post-test.

- A total of 2,135 students (representing provision in 71 Colleges of Further Education and Local Education Authorities) took the reading pre-test, and 1,224 also took the reading post-test (57 per cent retention). Writing scripts were received from 1,724 students at pre-test, and 937 at post-test (54 per cent retention). Detailed comparisons showed that those who returned at post-test were fully representative of the whole pre-test sample test, in terms of the characteristics on which information was available.
- Most of the students who took part in the study were in 'normal', ongoing basic skills provision. However, a small number of experimental and highly intensive courses were mounted in March 1999, and 206 students who attended those courses were studied both in their own right and as part of the full sample.
- Background data were gathered on students, and 177 adult literacy tutors responded to a questionnaire.
- Qualitative information was derived from interviews with seven basic skills co-ordinators and from fieldworkers' serendipitous impressions – there was no opportunity to carry out systematic observations of teaching.

Previous studies

- None of the previous national studies of progress in adult literacy in Britain or the USA provided sufficiently reliable data.
- **It therefore appears that the study reported in this volume is the first in the English-speaking world to provide reliable evidence of progress in adult literacy based on an adequately representative national sample.**

Adult literacy teachers and teaching in England and Wales

- Information from a questionnaire returned by 177 adult literacy tutors provided a sketch of adult literacy teachers and teaching.
- Adult basic skills is a largely part-time and very largely female profession. Tutors are predominantly qualified in Arts subjects and mostly teach small groups a few hours per week.
- Adult literacy tutors seemed to keep largely up to date in terms of attending courses and reading books relevant to students' needs, but the writers on literacy who were most familiar to them had produced their most influential work some time ago.
- Overall, professional development and management support for tutors appeared patchy.

- It seemed that appropriate use was being made of classroom assistants, where they were available. No explanation was available of why nearly two fifths of tutors had no assistance.
- The overall impression of teaching was one of flexibility and individual initiative. This could be seen either as professionalism or as 'winging it' – an approach that may be forced on tutors by the highly part-time nature of their work.

The sample

The full sample of students in this study:

- contained significantly more women than men;
- represented a range of ages and occupational statuses;
- contained minorities of people for whom English was an additional language, and of ethnicities other than white;
- were mostly poorly qualified;
- had mostly attended basic skills provision before, and a minority were attending more than one form of provision in 1998/99;
- mostly received more than 30 hours of tuition between pre- and post-test;
- had reading levels quite similar, on average, to a national sample of 9-year-olds;
- were judged by their tutors to range from very weak to about the national average.

The main findings

- **The students achieved a small but statistically significant improvement in reading.**
- **The students achieved very small but statistically significant improvements in writing, but only in terms of length of script and quality of handwriting. No significant improvements were found in terms of reduction of errors or increase in complexity.**
- These findings were true both for the full sample and (except for handwriting) for a subsample of 206 students who took part in highly intensive courses in March 1999.
- In reading, over half the sample were already reading at a functional level at pre-test, and about one student in 10 was already close to the national norm. However, about three in ten had very low pre-test scores.

- Even so, these findings suggest that an even smaller proportion of adults in greatest need of help with literacy are being reached than previously thought.
- Many students seemed to have developed coping strategies for reading non-continuous 'official'-type texts, but could cope less well with continuous texts such as newspaper articles.
- The students in the study may be unrepresentative of adults in the lower half of the national distribution of literacy attainment in this disjunction of reading skills.
- Many students seemed to have distinctly poorer writing than reading skills.
- Several of these findings lead to the conclusion that many students' literacy attainments are uneven, between reading and writing, between types of reading material, and from one occasion to another.
- Some students seemed to attend as much to maintain their skills as to improve them. This may be particularly true of those who have learnt to cope better with non-continuous than with continuous texts.

Factors associated with progress

- The students' gains were statistically related to their background characteristics, to the amount of tuition they had received between pre- and post-test, and to important variables from the tutor questionnaire.
- In writing, no clear pattern of factors associated with progress emerged.
- The analysis against background characteristics showed that virtually all subgroups of the full sample made progress in reading, but very few factors associated with *differential* progress were discovered.
- **Students who attended 51-60 hours of literacy tuition between pre- and post-test made the largest gain of any subgroup. Since the maximum number of teaching weeks between the tests was about 20, these were students who had attended very regularly.**
- Since the students on intensive courses by definition attended regularly, the finding on the benefit of regular attendance suggests that intensive courses could be particularly effective.
- In the analyses against tutor questionnaire variables, most factors produced non-significant results, and only two factors were discovered to be significantly associated with progress.
- Where all the tutors in a particular provider's area had qualified teacher status, students made significantly more progress than in other areas.

- **Where tutors had help in the classroom (volunteers or paid assistants), students made significant progress, but where tutors had no assistance students on average made no progress.**
- Interviews with co-ordinators in seven areas where students made statistically significant progress revealed little that was unexpected, except perhaps a tendency towards more detailed attention to staff induction and development.
- A number of findings suggested a need for greater professionalisation of the adult basic skills teaching force.

Recommendations

- **All new students should be encouraged to attend very regularly, perhaps on an intensive course/provision.** Intensive provision should perhaps also be offered to existing students who want to try getting a quick boost to their skills.
- Many students will have the further goal of not losing the skills they have gained, **and these students will need both maintenance of their skills and support for their literacy dealings with the world.** They will continue to need non-intensive provision.
- In-service professional development for tutors should embed attention to subject knowledge of the practicalities of literacy (teaching spelling, phonemic awareness and a range of cueing systems, comprehension, etc.) in a broader context of up-to-date theory, and aspects of pedagogy specific to literacy should receive more emphasis than general principles of teaching. Access to in-service provision should be eased for the large majority of the profession who are part-time.
- Improved professionalisation of adult literacy tutors should be designed to lead to more direct teaching of the specifics of literacy.
- There is a need for a planned series of micro-studies, of which four are suggested below.
- Methods of making classroom assistance more widely available should be examined, and the best ways to deploy tutors' classroom assistants should be investigated.
- Instruments for assessing students' progress need to be able to detect very small steps of progress at the lowest levels.
- The conditions in which students' learning is best consolidated and maintained need to be much better understood.
- Reasons for the apparent discrepancy between reading and writing attainment should be investigated, along with its implications for teaching.

Chapter 1

Context, aims and outline of the study

1.1 Context

The context in which this report is published differs significantly from that in which the study was launched – because of *A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy* (Moser Report, 1999) and its inauguration of a new era in adult basic skills in England, and *Improving Standards of Literacy and Numeracy in Wales: a National Strategy* (Basic Skills Agency, 2000) with its proposals for Wales. The study began as a data-gathering exercise within a basic skills context of 'business as usual', though the 'business' was steadily expanding. This report was published after the two reports put basic skills in the educational and political spotlight, and set ambitious targets for the expansion of provision. In both countries new structures were to be established. In England, a Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was to come into existence in April 2001, together with 47 local LSCs, and subsume many of the functions of the Further Education Funding Council and the Training and Enterprise Councils. For Wales, Community Consortia for Education and Training were proposed. Each country was to have a national curriculum and a national test for basic skills and enhanced training for basic skills teachers. The results reported here may therefore contribute more than had been envisaged to the development of policy and practice.

Through the years of 'business as usual', the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) consistently encouraged greater take-up of adult literacy provision in England and Wales: for instance, between 1995/96 and 1996/97 alone, the number of people enrolled in provision for adult literacy (alone, or combined with numeracy) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) rose from 328,801 to 362,449, an increase of 10.2 per cent (BSA, 1999, Table 5, p. 3). The Agency also encouraged the spread of good practice in basic skills tuition, in the assessment and accreditation of students, and in the accreditation of programmes and staff development. It published materials and frameworks for student assessment, and commissioned research into student retention, dropout and progression, into the effectiveness of family literacy and workplace programmes, and into the impact of basic skills support in Colleges of Further Education on student retention and achievement.

But a significant gap in the BSA's knowledge remained: there was little information on the effectiveness of basic skills provision, that is, on the amount of progress which

adults make in such provision. The previous information was both limited and dated (see chapter 2). In early 1998, the Agency therefore commissioned research into this area from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). The study began in early 1998 and lasted two years.

1.2 Aims

The aims of the study were to investigate:

- **the progress made in literacy by adults in dedicated basic skills provision offered by Colleges of Further Education (FE Colleges) and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales, and**
- **factors associated with improvement in literacy by adults in such provision.**

'Dedicated' meant provision in which improvement in basic skills was the students' primary objective and not, for instance, basic skills support for students whose main programme was some other course of study. The term 'provision' is used here instead of 'programmes' or 'courses' in order to include drop-in provision and one-to-one college tuition in addition to timetabled courses for groups of students. The study was intended to cover dedicated adult literacy provision (with or without numeracy), whether delivered in timetabled group provision, open learning, drop-in, or one-to-one tuition in an FE College or LEA centre with a tutor (with or without support from volunteers or paid assistants).

There were also various exclusions from the study's remit. It was *not* designed to cover numeracy, basic skills support as an adjunct to other courses, family literacy programmes, employment-related courses, literacy schemes in prisons, one-to-one home tuition, literacy in Welsh, or distance learning. It was also *not* designed to cover provision that was solely for people with EAL or who had learning difficulties, though where such students were attending more general provision they were to be included.

The study was to be designed to provide answers not only to the question 'How much progress do adult literacy students make?', but also to the question 'How good is their progress in national terms?' 'In national terms' meant that the study should provide:

- **norm-referenced statistics to answer the question 'How good was the progress made by these students in relation to national adult norms for literacy?'**
- **some comparison with the performance of school pupils**
- **criterion-referenced statistics to answer the question 'What proportion of the students tested moved up at least one level on a relevant set of literacy Standards?'**

This was to be a progress study, designed to estimate any change in attainment that was occurring in 'normal', ongoing, typical adult literacy provision. It was not an

intervention or impact study, in the sense that there was no attempt to introduce any innovations or special initiatives into the situation, still less to evaluate any such innovations.

There was a partial exception to this, however. In early 1999, the BSA received approval to fund a small number of intensive basic skills courses. These were to begin in late February, provide 60 hours of tuition, and be completed by the end of March. Nine providers in England agreed to mount three courses each, with each course group numbering 10 students. These courses used a pilot version of the new curriculum for adult basic skills which was due to be published in 2000, and incorporated more direct teaching of literacy skills than was evident in conventional provision (see Chapter 3).

The Basic Skills Agency commissioned NFER to measure the progress of students in these courses too. (A parallel qualitative evaluation was also commissioned – see Basic Skills Agency, 2000.) It was further agreed between the BSA and NFER that this group of students would not only be studied in their own right, but be counted towards the existing study. In a sense, the intensive courses constituted a small 'experimental' condition within what was otherwise purely a progress study; although there had been intensive courses before, this was the first attempt to mount a number of such courses simultaneously and study them systematically.

The intensive courses were studied in exactly the same way as the forms of provision which contributed to the ongoing study, and this report covers progress in both 'normal' provision and the intensive courses. Where necessary, the two aspects of the study are distinguished by referring to the 'full sample' and 'the intensive students/sample'. The students in the intensive sample numbered 206.

1.3 Outline of how the study was carried out

(A full description of how the study was carried out is given in the Appendices.)

About 30 adult basic skills co-ordinators attended consultation meetings at the Agency to help shape the project. Their input was crucial to the design of the reading tests, and to smoothing the fieldworkers' paths.

A set of reading tests was compiled from items used in previous studies:

- **the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) of 1996** (Carey *et al.*, 1997)
- **the *Lost Opportunities* study of linguistic minority adults of 1994** (Carr-Hill *et al.*, 1996)
- **an unpublished battery of test items devised for the Agency by NFER in 1992-93, and**
- **the International Reading Literacy Study of 9-year-olds of 1991** (Elley, 1992).

Two main reading test forms were devised. Half the sample (randomly assigned) took each form at pre-test, and the other form at post-test. A complex and innovative statistical process was used to equate the test forms (see section E.1). Briefly, this involved taking the statistical values of the IALS items on the scale used in that study as fixed (because they were derived from a nationally representative sample), using those values to calculate values on the IALS scale for the non-IALS items, and then using the complete set of IALS items values to calculate scores on that scale for each student.

The tests made literacy demands which could be considered largely functional: that is, they simulated public or other real-world literacy tasks likely to be faced in everyday life. The early sections of the reading tests made least demand on students' literacy, while later sections (using IALS tasks) required them not only to read the stimuli but also to write their answers unaided. One-sentence writing prompts were also used at pre- and post-test.

Background data were gathered on the students, plus the number of hours of tuition attended between pre- and post-test. Additional information was gathered by means of a tutor questionnaire. A very small amount of qualitative information was gathered from interviews with seven basic skills co-ordinators and from fieldworkers' reports of serendipitous observations – they were not required, and did not have the opportunity, to observe teaching sessions systematically.

The reading data were analysed against the scale used in IALS. The writing scripts were assessed according to a detailed analytic scheme. Both sets of results were then related to the background data, and the reading results also to some variables from the tutor questionnaire.

The pre-tests were administered between October 1998 and May 1999. Meanwhile, post-testing began in March 1999 (because some provision ended at Easter), and continued until July. (For the explanation of the lengthy pre-testing period, see section A.7.) The shortest period between pre- and post-test for any student was one month – in the intensive courses. In theory, the longest period between tests could have been nine months. In practice, because those who were pre-tested first were also post-tested first, the maximum period was six months. Because of the Christmas, Easter and half-term holidays, no student could have attended more than 20 weeks of provision between tests.

A total of 2,135 students (representing provision in 71 FE Colleges and LEAs) took the reading pre-test, and 1,224 also took the reading post-test (57 per cent retention). Writing scripts were received from 1,724 students at pre-test, and 937 at post-test (54 per cent retention). Because of the relatively low retention rates,

detailed comparisons were carried out between the students who returned at post-test and the whole pre-test sample (see section A.9). Briefly, the background characteristics (gender, age, occupational status, etc.) of the full sample and the 'returners' subsample were compared; also the distributions of pre-test scores for the two groups. These comparisons showed that the returners' characteristics and scores were a very close match for those of the full pre-test sample, and therefore that the returners could be treated as fully representative of all those who had taken the pre-test, in terms of the characteristics on which information was available.

1.4 Structure of this report

Descriptions of various aspects of the methodology fill the Appendices. Previous national studies of adult literacy in Britain and the United States are analysed in chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides a sketch of adult literacy teachers and teaching in England and Wales, and the sample of students who participated in this study is described in chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides the quantitative evidence on students' progress in reading and writing, and in chapter 6 a search is made for factors associated with that progress. Chapter 7 presents an overall summary and recommendations.

Chapter 2

Previous national studies of progress in adult literacy

2.1 Previous national studies of progress in adult literacy in Britain

There have been three previous supposedly national studies of progress in adult literacy in England and Wales. The first two were carried out in the late 1970s during the 'Right to Read' campaign, best known for the associated BBC television series 'On the Move'. That was also a period of very rapid expansion in adult basic education. The third, in 1989/90, was an attempt to study different styles of provision.

2.1.1 Jones and Charnley (1978)

The slightly earlier of the two studies in the 1970s (1975-77) was a qualitative survey of the views of organisers, tutors and students. No exact figures were given in the report for the numbers of people interviewed, but the number of research areas was six (Jones and Charnley, 1978, p.9) and at a later point (p.73) the numbers of students interviewed in two of these areas appear to be given as 41 and 39; perhaps about 240 students took part in all. No attempt was made to measure students' progress directly, and the resulting report had little to say about progress in literacy. Jones and Charnley (1978, pp.93-95) provided nearly three pages of quotations from interviews with students testifying to their progress, and then (p.96) gave this summary:

> *[R]elatively few students were found who were ready to exercise their skills in public. They might sign a cheque in public with confidence, but only after the details had been filled in at home. This reluctance was most noticeable in writing. Students generally believed that they had made more progress with reading than with writing; but that most progress of all had been in feeling better about themselves. And this was seen more frequently in those who had attended groups than among those under tuition at home.*

Later (p.110) they made this judgement based on all the evidence in the survey:

> *The main body of those who persevered in tuition made progress in their skills that was slow but steady, and there were a very few examples of astonishingly rapid progress towards reading and writing.*

2.1.2 Gorman and Moss (1979)

The second study in the 1970s (1976-79) was complementary to the first because it was a specifically and purely quantitative survey. It was carried out by the NFER for the Department of Education and Science, and was directed by Tom Gorman (1981; Gorman and Moss, 1979), who also devised the scheme for the assessment of writing for the present study. The 1976-79 survey materials contained tests of reading, writing and spelling, and the tests were administered at both stages by basic skills tutors.

The survey ran into severe data-collection difficulties. The target sample was set at 2,000 students; pre-test materials were despatched in December 1977 to 1,831 students; by March 1978, 1,238 sets of materials (68 per cent of those distributed) had been returned. Post-testing was undertaken in June 1979; scheme organisers were asked to distribute the post-tests to those students from the pre-test sample who were still receiving tuition. A total of 1,158 students (94 per cent of the pre-test sample) were traced; 378 (33 per cent of those traced) were no longer receiving tuition; and 194 (17 per cent of those traced) failed to respond; so that post-tests were received from 586 students (51 per cent of those traced). However, some students returned incomplete sets of post-test materials. The final numbers on whom pre-/post-test comparisons were based were therefore as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: **Numbers of students pre- and post-tested in 1976-79 adult literacy study in England**

	N	*Percentage of pre-test sample*
Reading	541	44%
Writing	485	39%
Spelling	440	36%
Overall	562	45%

Note: The figure for spelling, and various others to be quoted here, are not given in the published article (Gorman, 1981), but are culled from the unpublished full research report (Gorman and Moss, 1979), of which archive copies are kept at NFER.

Because not all items were common between the two occasions, a one-parameter Item Response Theory (IRT) model (Rasch scaling) with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10 was used to calibrate all items on a common scale via the items that were common. This was believed at the time to be a statistically valid method, and it was used in national surveys of schoolchildren's literacy and numeracy attainments

from 1978 into the early 1980s. However, the Rasch model then came under such conceptual attack that it was abandoned (in school-level surveys it was replaced by multi-level modelling).

The results are summarised in Table 2.2. Given the low retention rates and the dubious statistical model, they need to be taken with some caution.

Table 2.2: **Results of 1976-79 adult literacy study in England**

		Average scaled scores						
Skill	*N*	*Pre-test*	*Post-test*	*Average gain*	*s.d. of gain*	*z-score*	*Probability*	*Effect size*
Reading	541	51.4	52.9	1.5	6.5	5.4	$p<0.001$	0.15
Writing	485	53.7	56.3	2.6	4.6	12.4	$p<0.001$	0.26
Spelling	440	54.0	57.0	3.0	5.5	11.4	$p<0.001$	0.30
Overall	562	51.3	53.4	2.1	4.6	10.8	$p<0.001$	0.21

Key: N = sample size; s.d. = standard deviation

Sources: Tests of statistical significance and effect sizes calculated for this report; otherwise Gorman and Moss (1979, Table 7, p.7.17).

Note: The effect sizes were calculated by dividing the gain by the s.d. of the reporting scale (10).

All four gain scores were statistically significant. From the effect sizes, the gains in writing and spelling appear educationally significant (greater than a quarter of a standard deviation), those for reading and the overall score less convincingly so.

2.1.3 Abell (1992)

In 1989/90 an attempt was made to relate different styles of provision in adult literacy (small group, drop-in, one-to-one, etc.) to effectiveness in terms of student progress. Questionnaires were sent to organisers, tutors and students. Tutors' and students' perceptions of the students' progress were compared, and further triangulated against independent assessors' reports 'on progress identified in the writing of 50% of the students in the sample' (Abell, 1992, p.48). The report (p.7) claimed that

> *96% of students who had completed a course or who had remained in provision throughout the study were firmly convinced that they had made progress. Reports from tutors and independent assessors supported these claims. This progress did not appear to have been dependent on the style of provision in which they participated.*

However, these claims rested on a very small base (see especially Abell, 1992, Figure 10, p.81). The number of questionnaires sent out initially to students in September 1989 was 221, of which 174 (79 per cent) were returned. Of this group, 78 (45 per cent) returned the follow-up questionnaire in April/May 1990. Thus the '96% of students who . . . were firmly convinced that they had made progress' amounted to 75 people. And the 50 per cent of the sample whose writing was assessed appears to have consisted of 39 people. The claims about progress should be taken as subjective and as referring only to a small group.

The conclusion that 'progress did not appear to have been dependent on the style of provision' was also open to question: the report conceded (for example on p.5) that different styles of provision could not reliably be distinguished on the ground, and in any case the sample of students was much too small to have supported conclusions about different styles, even if they could have been distinguished. It would be safer to conclude that this research provided no evidence either way on the relationship between styles of provision and progress.

2.2 Previous national studies of progress in adult literacy in the United States

Much more research has been done in the USA than in Britain on adult literacy, including three supposedly national progress studies. However, all of those studies appear problematic (the following summaries are based on the review by Beder, 1999):

1. A 1965-68 study sampled courses in small areas of New York, New Jersey and California only and was therefore not genuinely national. The reading test used (in the absence then of instruments designed for adults) was a school-level test of doubtful validity for adults. The first and second post-tests were conducted six and 12 months after the pre-test. The numbers of people on whom post-test data were gathered were 1,641 and 1,425 respectively, but the number pre-tested was not stated. Adults who had been pre-tested but had not attended classes were treated as a control group – but their refusal to attend means that they were not a genuine control or comparison group. Both they and participants made equivalent gains, and the participants' gain was therefore statistically non-significant – but the comparison seems unreliable.

2. A 1972 study used a reading comprehension test designed for adults, which appears to have had a ceiling effect. The pre-test was in February-March 1972 and the post-test in May 1972. Of the 1,108 students pre-tested, only 441 (40 per cent) returned at post-test. The gains expressed in fractions of a grade level (roughly equivalent to months of reading age) were half a year or less, but were statistically significant. However, the data appear unreliable because of the ceiling effect, the poor retention rate and the small sample size relative to the population.

3. The National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs was carried out in 1990-94. It suffered massive data-collection problems, mainly through attrition, and of such severity that the US government called in a new group of consultants to re-analyse the data. The target pre-test sample was 19,796 adults, but the achieved pre-test sample was 11,354 (57 per cent of the target). Post-test data were obtained from 2,333 people (21 per cent of those pre-tested, 12 per cent of the target sample). But 1,719 post-tests had to be withdrawn from analysis because of non-completion or floor or ceiling effects, so that gains were calculated on only 614 cases (five per cent of those pre-tested, three per cent of the target sample). The new group of consultants quite reasonably concluded that the test data were unusable.

Beder's (1999, p.5) conclusion (from these national surveys and several local US progress studies) was that, 'As measured by tests, the evidence is insufficient to determine whether or not participants in adult . . . education gain in basic skills.'

A similar conclusion was reached by Sheehan-Holt and Smith (2000). They re-analysed data from the (US) National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) of the early 1990s (Kirsch *et al.*, 1993) in which a sample of 24,944 people representative of the full ability range participated. This was not a progress study but a single-occasion 'snapshot'. Nevertheless, by appropriate statistical methods, Sheehan-Holt and Smith (2000, p.227) were able to compare adults 'at the lower end of the literacy skills continuum' within the survey who had participated in adult literacy provision, with directly comparable people who had not. The main finding was that 'no association was found between participation in (basic skills) programs and literacy skills' (p.227).

However, there was a positive association between participation in basic skills and several types of reading practice: 'Participants read more magazines, books, personal documents and document materials for work than nonparticipants' (p.240). Sheehan-Holt and Smith went on to discuss the plausible theory that increased reading would over time lead to improved reading attainment; their analysis revealed, however, that there were 'no differences in literacy proficiencies between those who participated in basic skills programs more than one year prior to the NALS assessment and those who were enrolled within one year of the NALS' (p.240).

Overall, therefore, in the United States convincing national evidence has yet to be found, that participants in adult basic skills provision improve their literacy attainment. Beder (1999) reached the same conclusion from several local US studies also, though Sticht and Armstrong (1994) did find that other local US studies showed a positive impact.

2.3 Summary

- There has been only one previous quantitative national study of progress in adult literacy in Britain. That study was conducted over 20 years ago, its samples were small, and the statistical model used has since been found wanting. If reliable, the results suggest that reasonable progress was made in the forms of adult literacy provision then in use.

- None of the national progress studies of adult literacy in the USA provided reliable data, while a recent re-analysis of data from a large national one-off survey in the USA found no evidence of benefit to literacy attainment of participation in adult basic skills provision.

- *It therefore appears that the study reported in this volume is the first in the English-speaking world to provide reliable evidence of progress in adult literacy based on an adequately representative national sample.*

Chapter 3

Adult literacy teachers and teaching in England and Wales

3.1 Introduction

The Moser Report (1999, pp.57-60) provided a sketch of effective teachers and effective teaching of basic skills in England, based on the evidence then available. This chapter provides a more detailed picture for England and Wales based largely on quantitative findings from the tutor questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix D), with a few insights from fieldworkers' impressions. The questionnaires were sent out and returned during the summer term of 1999. A total of 263 questionnaires were sent out, and 177 (67 per cent) were returned.

Most of the questionnaire addressed the tutors' adult basic skills teaching in general, but some sections focused on the group that had been tested by an NFER fieldworker – where questions focused on this group this is stated. The main topics covered were: the tutors' backgrounds, their current basic skills teaching in general and current adult literacy teaching in particular, any classroom assistance they received, management support, planning, teaching, assessment, and professional development.

Almost all the questions were answered by high percentages of respondents; where this was the case, the responses were taken to be representative of the whole sample, percentages were calculated on the basis of those responding, and no attention is drawn to the level of non-response. But where non-response was high, this is stated and percentages (including those for non-response) were usually calculated on the basis of the whole sample. All sample sizes quoted are numbers of tutors.

In chapter 6 some of the factors analysed here are related to students' progress in reading.

3.2 Tutors' background

3.2.1 Gender

The great majority of the tutors (90 per cent) were women.

3.2.2 Qualifications

The range and frequency of the tutors' qualifications are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: **Tutors' formal educational qualifications**

Qualification	*N*	%
Master's degree or Doctorate	17	10%
Bachelor's degree	31	18%
Bachelor's degree which includes Education	68	38%
PGCE	29	16%
Teacher's Certificate	96	54%
City & Guilds Certificate 9282	86	49%
City & Guilds Certificate 9283	50	28%
City & Guilds Certificate 9284	10	6%
City & Guilds Certificate 9285	68	38%
A Post experience diploma in adult literacy/basic skills	38	22%
A Post experience diploma in any other subject	26	15%

Note: Percentages are based on the full responding sample of 177. They do not total to 100 because almost all tutors had more than one qualification.

When subcategories were combined, it was found that just over half (56 per cent) of the tutors were graduates, 75 per cent had qualified teacher status (PGCE, Teacher's Certificate, or Bachelor's degree which included Education), and over 80 per cent had a qualification in teaching basic skills (mainly City and Guilds certificates). Thus the great majority of tutors had both QTS and a basic skills certificate.

Where tutors had a first or higher degree, they were asked to state the main subject(s). The major categories were English and Education, with Humanities (broadly defined) third, and very few reporting mathematics or science – but these were adult literacy tutors.

3.2.3 Teaching experience

Tutors were asked how many years' teaching experience they had had up to the end of the academic year 1998/99, in total and in adult literacy. They were asked to give figures separately for full-time teaching (over 35 hours a week) and part-time teaching. The results are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: **Tutors' teaching experience, in years**

	Overall				*In adult literacy*			
	Full-time		*Part-time*		*Full-time*		*Part-time*	
Years	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
0-5	36	44%	46	38%	30	53%	73	47%
6-10	16	19%	40	33%	16	28%	41	26%
11-15	20	25%	19	16%	8	14%	24	14%
16-20	4	5%	10	8%	2	4%	10	8%
20+	6	7%	7	6%	1	2%	6	4%
Total	**82**	**100%**	**122**	**100%**	**57**	**100%**	**156**	**100%**

Note: The percentages relate to the totals for the relevant categories.

A total of 82 tutors (46 per cent of the total) had full-time teaching experience; of these, nearly half had less than six years' experience and only just over one third had more than 10 years' experience. Fifty-seven tutors had full-time experience in adult literacy, of whom just over half had less than six years' experience and only a fifth had more than 10 years' experience. More tutors reported having part-time adult literacy teaching experience than reported having part-time teaching experience in general; this may imply that some had taught adult literacy part-time while holding a full-time teaching post and/or that some tutors' only teaching experience was part-time in adult literacy.

3.3 The tutors' current basic skills teaching in general

3.3.1 Working hours, overall

The tutors were asked whether they were currently teaching adult basic skills full-time or part-time: 50 (28 per cent) were teaching full-time and 125 (71 per cent) part-time (two did not answer this question).

The Basic Skills Agency's statistical report for 1996/97 (BSA, 1999, Table 10, p.9) provided national data from which the proportion of paid adult literacy and numeracy staff in England and Wales who were full-time in that year could be calculated, namely 9.3 per cent, or three times the proportion in this study. However, 'paid staff' in the BSA's statistics included paid assistants as well as tutors; and it seems likely that full-time tutors would have been more likely to respond to the questionnaire used in this study.

The Moser Report (1999, pp.29, 58) drew attention to the largely part-time nature of the basic skills teaching force, and called for the proportion of full-time staff to be increased.

Tutors were also asked about the number of hours per week they were teaching basic skills, both in total and, within that, adult literacy. 'Teaching' was defined as contact hours with students, including resource-based learning. The results are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: **Tutors' teaching hours, overall and in adult literacy**

Contact hours per week	*Overall*		*Adult literacy*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
<5	18	10%	29	17%
5-9	38	22%	54	32%
10-14	34	20%	43	25%
15-19	40	23%	23	13%
20-24	33	19%	15	9%
25-29	4	2%	2	1%
30-34	5	3%	2	1%
>34	3	2%	3	2%
Total	**175**	**100%**	**171**	**100%**

Note: The percentages relate to the totals for the relevant categories.

Just over half the respondents were teaching less than 15 hours per week overall. Very few (12, or seven per cent) were teaching more than 24 hours a week; this implies that almost all those working full-time had non-contact time for preparation, assessment, co-ordination and administration. Almost half the respondents were teaching less than 10 hours a week of adult literacy. The distribution of hours teaching adult literacy against overall teaching hours, implies that most tutors spent about one-third of their hours teaching subjects other than adult literacy (perhaps mainly numeracy, though this question was not asked).

3.3.2 Hours teaching tested group

More specifically, tutors were asked to state the number of hours per week they taught the group that was visited and tested by an NFER fieldworker; the results are shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: **Numbers of hours per week tutors taught provision visited by NFER fieldworker**

Hours per week	*N*	%
2	91	55%
3	29	17%
4	18	11%
5	3	2%
6	14	8%
7-24	12	7%
Total	**167**	**100%**

3.3.3 Size of teaching groups

Tutors were asked to state the average size of the adult literacy groups they taught, in terms of the number of students usually *present* (not the number on roll). The results are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: **Average size of adult literacy groups taught**

Size of group	*N*	%
1-5	19	11%
6	30	17%
7	19	11%
8	57	33%
9	10	6%
10	25	15%
11-30	13	8%
Total	**173**	**100%**

Just over half taught the relevant group two hours per week, with a further 38 per cent teaching that group between three and six hours a week. The small number reporting larger numbers of hours per week were probably those running drop-in and/or intensive provision.

Four-fifths of respondents reported group sizes of between six and ten. The few very large group sizes may represent tutors supervising drop-in provision and/or those

who taught more than one group and perhaps gave a total rather than an average. The very small groups probably represented both some one-to-one tuition and the fact that the data were collected late in the academic year.

The general picture so far confirms statistically what is known informally: this is a largely part-time and very largely female profession, predominantly qualified in Arts subjects and predominantly teaching small groups a few hours per week.

3.4 Professional development

Tutors were asked if they had attended any professional development (in-service) activities (such as courses, conferences, seminars) in the three academic years since September 1996; 156 (91 per cent of those responding) said they had. The areas covered are shown in Table 3.6; the range mainly covered practically relevant topics.

Table 3.6: **Areas covered in professional development, 1996-99**

Area	*N*	%
Teaching of reading	74	42%
Teaching of writing	68	38%
Recent research in literacy	78	44%
Phonological awareness	38	22%
IT and literacy	69	39%
Other	78	44%

Note: The percentages shown are based on the full sample of 177, and do not sum to 100 because tutors could give more than one answer.

There were also several indirect questions concerning tutors' professional knowledge. They were asked to name the book on the teaching of literacy they had read most recently, and state the year in which they read it. A total of 141 tutors (80 per cent of the total) gave a title. The titles were too numerous to list, and only three received more than four mentions each, so Table 3.7 instead shows broad categories. Some titles were forms of publication other than books.

Table 3.7: **Categories of publication on the teaching of literacy read most recently**

Category	*Number of mentions*
ALBSU/BSA publications	42
Books on dyslexia	35
Books on spelling	13
General adult learning	8
Educational press	5
Moser Report	4
Books on EAL	2
Other	32
Total	**141**

The Moser Report was hot off the press when the questionnaires went out: it is therefore interesting that even four tutors had read it. The categories showed a heavy emphasis on practical information directly relevant to students' special educational needs. Fifty-seven tutors (32 per cent of the sample) did not state the year in which the book was read. Of the 120 who did, 91 (76 per cent) said 1999, 22 (18 per cent) said 1998, and only seven (6 per cent) gave an earlier date.

Tutors were also given a list of 14 (mainly British) authors who have published widely on literacy, and asked to indicate how familiar each author's name was to them. Non-responses ranged between 25 and 37 per cent. Because 'Not familiar' was the response of at least half of respondents to every name, figures for 'familiar' and 'some knowledge' were combined. The resulting data for familiarity are shown in Table 3.8 overleaf in descending order.

The list of authors was very mixed. In particular no author on it could be considered to have written the equivalent for adult literacy of Roger Beard's analysis of the evidence base for the National Literacy Strategy – because so far no-one had written such an analysis. However, the responses yielded some interesting findings.

The two 'gurus' of the whole language movement, Ken Goodman and Frank Smith, were the most familiar names – but their reputations were made in the 1960s and early 1970s. They were also the only two non-British authors on the list. The two authors whose work has been most concerned with adult literacy, David Barton and Mary Hamilton, were in middling positions. It is perhaps more understandable that the three whose work has been most concerned with details of initial teaching (Sue Lloyd, Henrietta Dombey, Liz Waterland) should have been least familiar.

Table 3.8: **Tutors' familiarity with particular authors' work on literacy**

Author	*Familiar*	
	N	%
K. Goodman	47	27%
F. Smith	44	25%
M. Snowling	37	21%
R. Beard	35	20%
P. Bryant	32	18%
L. Bradley	31	18%
D. Barton	29	16%
U. Goswami	24	14%
N. Bielby	20	11%
M. Hamilton	20	11%
M. Meek Spencer	16	9%
S. Lloyd	10	6%
H. Dombey	10	6%
L. Waterland	9	5%

Note: The percentages are based on the full sample of 177.

The overall impression from the information in this section is that the tutors who responded did largely keep up to date in terms of attending courses and reading books relevant to students' needs, but the authors who were most familiar to them had produced their most influential work some time ago. An implication for in-service training might be that subject knowledge of the practicalities of literacy teaching needs to be embedded in a broader context of up-to-date theory.

3.5 Management support

Tutors were asked what types of support they received from their line managers; 13 (seven per cent) said no support was provided. The results for forms of support which were reported by the other tutors are shown in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9: **Types of support received by tutors from line managers**

Type of support	*N*	%
Out of hours support	98	60%
Visits to their class	80	49%
Drop-in provision for tutors	60	37%
Enabling them to observe other tutors	33	20%
Other	35	21%
Total	**164**	**100%**

Note: Numbers and percentages do not total to 164 and 100 respectively because tutors could give more than one answer.

Among 'other' forms of support, 20 tutors (11 per cent) said they received constant support from their line managers, or could always refer to or contact them, and 11 tutors (six per cent) mentioned meetings (see section 3.6) as a form of support.

Overall, management support for tutors appeared patchy. This supports the comment in the Moser Report (1999, p.29) that the very part-time nature of the teaching force in adult basic skills 'necessarily restricts the amount of continuous professional training that teachers are able or willing to go to. The fact that basic skills teaching remains an area where there are few career opportunities for professional development means that it still remains an unattractive career . . . (I)t . . . makes it more difficult to recruit new teachers.'

3.6 Assistance with teaching

Tutors were asked if they regularly had volunteers and/or paid assistants working with them in the group visited for this study and, if so, how frequently this occurred, how many helpers were present on average per session, what aspects of the work the volunteers and assistants helped with, and how they (the tutors) organised this.

A total of 110 tutors (62 per cent) said they had people working with them, of whom 96 had volunteers and 22 had paid assistants (so that a few had both). The average number of volunteers present per session was one in 55 cases, two in 29 cases, and three or more in the remaining 12 cases – the largest number stated was nine (perhaps by a tutor running drop-in provision). One of the 22 tutors who had paid assistants had two, the rest having one each.

The figures for the frequency of this assistance are summarised in Table 3.10. The great majority of the tutors who had assistance had it most of the time – but it should be remembered that 67 tutors (38 per cent) said they had no assistance at all with the group visited for this study.

Table 3.10: **Average frequency over a term of assistance in class**

Frequency	*N*	%
Almost every session	85	77%
About $^3/_4$ of the sessions	18	16%
Less than $^3/_4$ of the sessions	7	7%
Total	**110**	**100%**

The aspects of the work which the volunteers and assistants helped with are shown in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11: **Aspects of work supported by helpers**

Aspect of the work	*Volunteers*		*Paid assistants*	
	N	%	*N*	%
Support for individual students	84	88%	22	100%
Support for more basic students	81	84%	15	68%
Support for whole group	30	31%	10	45%
Planning	16	17%	7	32%
Total	**96**	**100%**	**22**	**100%**

Notes: The Ns shown are numbers of tutors reporting that form of assistance from volunteers/paid assistants. The percentages are based on the total numbers of tutors saying they had volunteers/paid assistants. The percentages for paid assistants are based on a small total and should be treated with caution. Numbers and percentages do not total to 96/22 and 100 respectively because tutors could give more than one answer.

Thus the great majority of the assistants' efforts went, as might be expected, into supporting individual students, especially those with the greatest need. Many of the tutors' answers to a question on how they organised the work of their assistants, repeated this theme of giving individual support as and where needed.

However, 104 tutors (59 per cent of the total) gave answers to the organisation question which dealt with their management of their helpers. The predominant

themes were that the tutor and the assistant, sometimes with the student, discussed, devised and adapted the 'study programme'.

Overall it seemed that appropriate use was being made of assistants, where they were available. No explanation was available of why nearly two fifths of tutors had no assistance. The importance of this variable is underlined by the fact that it was the only 'teaching' variable which was found to have a positive relationship with students' progress (see section 6.4.).

3.7 Planning

3.7.1 Meetings

Two questions asked how frequently tutors had formal or informal meetings with other tutors to discuss and/or plan their adult literacy curriculum or teaching approaches in general; the results are shown in Table 3.12.

Table 3.12: **Frequency of formal and informal meetings**

Frequency	*Formal*		*Informal*	
	N	%	*N*	%
Every week	5	3%	54	31%
More than twice a term but not weekly	29	16%	61	35%
Twice a term	36	20%	9	5%
Once a term	87	49%	24	14%
Never	11	6%	21	12%
Total	**168**	**100%**	**169**	**100%**

That even a few tutors reported never having a formal meeting seems unsatisfactory, but perhaps the very short hours worked by many tutors made it impossible for them to attend, or for meetings to be arranged for them. The great majority had at least one formal meeting a term, and informal meetings were (understandably) considerably more frequent.

3.7.2 Curricula and schemes of work

Tutors were next asked if they followed a defined curriculum and (in a further question) a scheme of work in planning their adult literacy teaching; 88 (50 per cent) said they followed a defined curriculum and 79 (45 per cent) said they did not

(10 did not answer this question), while 147 (83 per cent) said they followed a scheme of work and 24 (14 per cent) said they did not (six did not answer this question).

Those who said they did follow a defined curriculum or a scheme of work were then asked about the basis of the curriculum and scheme of work; the results are shown in Table 3.13.

Table 3.13: **Basis of tutors' adult literacy curricula and schemes of work**

Basis	*curriculum*		*scheme of work*	
	N	%	*N*	%
based on an accreditation framework	97	55%	122	69%
devised by tutor	59	33%	114	64%
involving the students	16	9%	24	14%
devised by tutor's Programme Manager	9	5%	17	10%
Total	**167**	**100%**	**171**	**100%**

Notes: Numbers and percentages do not total to 167/171 and 100 respectively because tutors could give more than one answer. The fact that the percentages for curriculum sum to 102 is coincidental.

More tutors answered these questions than said they followed a defined curriculum or a scheme of work, and the data in Table 3.13 should therefore be taken to refer to curricula/schemes of work in general – this is also implied by the proportions of tutors who said they devised their own. Both involving students and relying on the Programme Manager were infrequent responses – most tutors derived their curricula and schemes of work from an accreditation framework or devised them themselves, and the data imply that many derived their schemes of work at least from both sources.

3.7.3 Sources of information for planning

More detail on tutors' planning of their adult literacy provision was gained from a multi-part question asking how much they relied on various sources of information. The results are shown in Table 3.14 in decreasing order of the response 'A great deal'.

By far the most commonly relied upon sources were students' individual learning plans and feedback from tutors' observations and assessments of students' work, in

other words evidence readily available in the classroom. Even their own previously prepared classes were relied upon by far fewer tutors. Textbooks seemed insignificant as a source of planning for most tutors, despite the substantial reading of BSA publications reported in Table 3.7 above and the substantial use of such materials reported in section 3.8.2 below. The very low percentage of tutors relying a great deal on other tutors or ABS specialists in their LEA/College seems consistent with the largely part-time nature of the teaching force, and with the low frequency of meetings already mentioned.

Table 3.14: **Sources relied on in planning adult literacy provision**

Source	*A great deal*		*A little*		*Not at all*		*TOTAL*	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
students' individual learning plans	157	91%	16	9%	0	0%	173	100%
feedback from their observations and assessments of students' work	150	88%	18	11%	2	1%	170	100%
their own previously prepared classes	49	30%	101	62%	13	8%	163	100%
textbooks or resource books other than those mentioned below	34	21%	123	74%	9	5%	166	100%
external assessments	25	16%	82	52%	52	33%	159	100%
other tutors or ABS specialists in their LEA/College	15	9%	89	56%	55	35%	159	100%
tutors' guides or tutor edition of textbook	14	9%	89	57%	52	34%	155	100%
students' edition of textbooks	9	6%	70	47%	69	47%	148	100%

Note: The Total Ns and percentages are row totals, and the percentages in each row are based on the total N for that row.

3.7.4 Planning students' progression in learning

Tutors were next asked how much weight they gave to various forms of evidence on their students' progress when planning their students' further progression in learning. The results are shown in Table 3.15, in descending order of the response 'A great deal'.

Table 3.15: **Weight given by tutors to various forms of evidence in planning their students' progression in learning**

Form of evidence	*Weight given in planning students' learning*							
	A great deal		*Some*		*None*		*Total*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Continuous assessment	140	81%	31	18%	1	1%	172	100%
Student self-assessment negotiated with the tutor	124	72%	45	26%	3	2%	172	100%
Students' portfolios	83	49%	81	48%	5	3%	169	100%
How well students do on written assignments	79	46%	90	53%	2	1%	171	100%
How well students do in oral work	49	29%	112	66%	9	5%	170	100%
Tutor-made tests	32	19%	89	51%	52	30%	173	100%
Listening to students read aloud	24	14%	103	60%	46	27%	173	100%
Published tests	16	9%	75	44%	80	47%	171	100%

Note: The Total Ns and percentages are row totals, and the percentages in each row are based on the total N for that row.

The categories listed in Table 3.15 were far from clear-cut; in fact all but the two test categories were aspects of continuous assessment. It is therefore not surprising that the great majority of tutors gave continuous assessment most weight. Although just over two fifths of respondents gave no weight to published tests when planning their students' progression in learning, and about three in ten gave no weight to tests they devised, still a majority gave some or a great deal of weight to these forms of evidence. Thus again the overall picture was of more reliance on sources of evidence which are readily and immediately available in the classroom.

The overall impression of planning for teaching was one of flexibility and individual initiative, with relatively little reliance on colleagues and substantial reliance by tutors on their own resources and on readily available evidence. To some, this may reflect a high level of professionalism; to others, it may seem like 'winging it' – but this approach may be largely forced on adult literacy tutors by the very part-time nature of their work, and by their students' wide range of attainment (see chapters 4 and 5) and mainly intermittent pattern of attendance.

3.8 Teaching and learning in general

3.8.1 Modes of teaching

Tutors were next asked to say approximately what proportion of the time in their

adult literacy classes was occupied by each of four modes of teaching; the results are shown in Table 3.16. Because non-response was unusually high for three of the four modes, non-response has been shown as a separate category, so that percentages are comparable for all four modes.

Individual teaching was the most frequent mode, and teaching groups selected by ability the least – two fifths of respondents never taught their students in such groups. Nearly one third of tutors taught individually all the time; the rest appeared to blend this mode with class teaching and teaching of small mixed-ability groups, with some also using ability grouping occasionally.

Table 3.16: **Approximate proportion of time in adult literacy classes occupied by different modes of teaching**

	Mode of teaching							
	Individual		*Class*		*Mixed ability*		*Ability groups*	
Proportion of time occupied by mode of teaching	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
All	54	31%	6	3%	19	11%	9	5%
about ¾	40	23%	4	2%	4	2%	5	3%
about ½	38	22%	34	19%	15	9%	13	7%
about ¼	35	20%	56	32%	60	34%	42	24%
(Almost) never	1	1%	51	29%	40	23%	70	40%
No response	9	5%	26	15%	39	22%	38	22%
Total	177	100%	177	100%	177	100%	177	100%

3.8.2 Content of schemes of work

Tutors were asked how often they included certain items in their scheme of work. The results are shown in Table 3.17, in decreasing order of the response 'Every lesson'.

There seemed to be a fairly clear division between the first six items in the list and the rest. The first six had combined 'Every lesson' and 'Most lessons' frequencies of between 58 and 85 per cent, while the rest had combined frequencies of 41 per cent or less. While some of the other items would no doubt be more difficult to include more frequently, the first six items together give a picture of tutors focusing predominantly on students' writing skills, in the context of writing for their own purposes, and on their ability to read and reason. The other items on the list, though focusing on rather more mechanical skills, were also covered.

Table 3.17: **Frequency of inclusion of items in scheme of work**

Item	*Every lesson*		*Most lessons*		*Some lessons*		*Never/almost never*		*Total*	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Work on spelling	62	36%	84	49%	23	13%	3	2%	172	100%
Work to develop spelling strategies	45	27%	77	46%	43	25%	1	1%	166	100%
Students writing for their own purposes	38	22%	73	42%	56	32%	2	1%	169	100%
Work to develop reading strategies	33	19%	70	41%	58	34%	7	4%	168	100%
Explaining the reasoning behind an answer	33	19%	68	39%	68	39%	2	1%	171	100%
Work on punctuation	29	17%	82	48%	58	34%	2	1%	171	100%
Work to develop a sight vocabulary	16	10%	30	18%	93	56%	24	15%	163	100%
Work on whole language/language experience	15[a]	9%	55	32%	91	53%	10	6%	171	100%
Work on hand-writing skills	14	8%	28	16%	105	61%	24	14%	171	100%
Reading a passage and answering questions on it	14	8%	57	33%	95	55%	5	3%	171	100%
Work on phonics, including phonemic awareness	12	7%	47	28%	96	56%	14	8%	169	100%
Reading aloud	10	6%	30	17%	94	55%	38	22%	172	100%
Grammar/syntax	10	6%	53	31%	97	57%	9	5%	169	100%
Cloze exercises	3	2%	27	16%	114	66%	28	16%	169	100%
Matching exercises	4	2%	14	8%	114	67%	36	21%	168	100%

Note: The Total Ns and percentages are row totals, and the percentages in each row are based on the total N for that row.

3.8.3 *Factors contributing to students' progress*

Tutors were asked, 'To make progress in literacy, how important do you think it is for students to . . . ', followed by a list of possible contributory factors. The results are shown in Table 3.18 in decreasing order of the response 'Very important'.

Table 3.18: **Perceived importance of various factors in making progress**

Factor	*Very important*		*Somewhat important*		*Not important*		*TOTAL*	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Develop self-confidence	169	98%	4	2%	0	0%	173	100%
Work on topics which are relevant to them	168	97%	6	3%	0	0%	174	100%
Be given support, evaluation and tutorials	164	95%	7	4%	0	0%	171	100%
Find their teaching group safe, socially	161	93%	12	7%	0	0%	173	100%
Regularly achieve short term goals	161	93%	12	7%	0	0%	173	100%
Have ownership of their own learning	159	92%	14	8%	0	0%	173	100%
Understand how literacy is used in real world	120	69%	50	29%	3	2%	173	100%
Read regularly	107	62%	63	36%	3	2%	173	100%
Write in an organised way	111	64%	62	36%	0	0%	173	100%
Develop phonological awareness	68	40%	100	59%	3	2%	171	100%
Understand concepts about print	53	32%	87	52%	25	15%	165	100%
Remember spellings	48	28%	119	70%	2	1%	169	100%
Carry out home study	36	21%	118	69%	18	11%	172	100%

Note: The Total Ns and percentages are row totals, and the percentages in each row are based on the total N for that row.

Table 3.18 reveals a split between the first six items, rated as 'very important' by over 90 per cent of respondents, and the rest. The top group of items has to do with general principles which are applicable to all forms of learning, while those rated less important overall are those which have to do directly with literacy (and study). Thus tutors appeared, on average, to rate the ethos of their students' learning circumstances as somewhat more important than the specifics of content. This would seem to indicate the persistence among adult literacy tutors of a strong 'liberal/humanist/community service' ethos, with rather less emphasis on students' progress and teaching directed to it. Such teaching would entail a detailed examination of the processes that contribute to extending students' repertoire of reading and writing skills.

3.9 The tutors' current adult literacy teaching in particular

For all the questions analysed in this section, tutors were asked to respond in terms of the adult literacy provision which they taught and which had been visited by an NFER fieldworker.

3.9.1 Access to IT

Tutors were asked how frequently students had access to computers and other IT equipment: of the 174 tutors who responded, 94 (54 per cent) said their students had such access every session, 51 (29 per cent) some sessions, and 29 (17 per cent) never.

3.9.2 Teaching materials

Next, tutors were asked two parallel sets of three questions about teaching materials. The questions concerned (1) textbooks or other commercially produced materials; (2) materials they devised themselves. They were asked, first, whether they used/devised such materials for teaching adult literacy to the group visited for this study and, if so, to list those they used/devised most frequently, and to state approximately what percentage of their adult literacy teaching time they based on the materials. In all, 161 tutors (91 per cent) said they used published materials, and 170 (96 per cent) said they devised their own, so the great majority used both. Results on published materials and the skills they address mentioned by at least 10 tutors are shown in Table 3.19, on types of self-devised materials mentioned by at least 10 tutors in Table 3.20, and on percentages of teaching time based on the two forms of material in Table 3.21.

Table 3.19: **Published materials used by tutors**

Frequently mentioned publications	*Number of tutors mentioning (>9)*
Brown and Brown	30
ALBSU/BSA resources	17
MCH resources	14
Alpha to Omega	14
Various sets of readers	12
Chalkface Project	11
Flexi-Packs	10
Frequently mentioned skills	
Spelling	39
General English skills	14

Many other publications and categories of skill besides those listed in Table 3.19 were mentioned by small numbers of tutors. Though many authors of materials were named, none was mentioned by more than five tutors.

Table 3.20: **Self-devised materials used by tutors**

	Number of tutors mentioning (>9)
Comprehension activities	30
Materials devised to meet individual students' needs	26
Alphabet/phonics	25
Materials from materials and magazines	23
Worksheets, general	22
Worksheets, spelling/punctuation	16
Materials for reading practice and/or modelling of writing	15
Punctuation activities	13
Cloze procedure	12
'Real' reading matter	10

Like the categories of publication read recently, analysed in section 3.3, both the published and the tutor-devised materials mentioned seemed to focus heavily on the practical skills of reading and writing. This finding seemed to be in some tension with the finding in the previous section, that tutors appeared on average to rate the ethos of their students' learning circumstances as somewhat more important than the specifics of content.

Table 3.21: **Percentages of teaching time based on published and tutor-devised materials**

Percentage of teaching time based on the material	*Type of material*			
	Published		*Devised by tutor*	
	N	%	*N*	%
76-100%	4	3%	26	15%
51-75%	21	13%	41	24%
26-50%	54	34%	60	35%
0-25%	82	51%	45	26%
Total	**161**	**100%**	**172**	**100%**

Note: Percentages for published material do not sum to 100 because of rounding errors.

Only about one tutor in six said they based more than half their teaching time on published materials; the corresponding proportion for tutor-devised materials was about two fifths. All the tutors appeared to rely on both forms of material to some extent.

3.10 Assessment

3.10.1 Co-ordination of record-keeping

A question (to which more than one response could be ticked) was put to tutors on how record-keeping was co-ordinated: 69 (39 per cent of the full sample of 177) said that they kept records themselves, 61 (35 per cent) that students each kept their own records, 59 (33 per cent) that records were kept centrally, and 48 (27 per cent) that other tutors also kept records. Practice therefore varied considerably, with more than one system operating in some places, presumably particularly where records were not kept centrally and tutors each kept their own.

3.10.2 Students' goals

Tutors were asked to indicate which goals each of their students was working towards. About 25 tutors did not answer this question; aggregated results for the rest, and the categories of goal which were specified in the questionnaire, are shown in Table 3.22.

Table 3.22: **Numbers of students working towards different goals**

Type of goal	Students		Number of tutors with students working towards this goal
	N	%	
Portfolio-based accreditation	787	56%	151
Self-determined goals	701	50%	129
Tests/exam-based accreditation	293	21%	69
None of these	11	1%	8
Total	**1411**	**100%**	

Note: The percentages do not total to 100 because students could be working towards more than one type of goal.

Hardly any students were working towards none of the goals mentioned, and at least 28 per cent were working towards more than one type of goal. Portfolio-based accreditation and self-determined goals were the most frequently reported. Externally-determined (test- or examination-based) accreditation was reported for only one student in five, and the great majority of students were therefore working towards goals set within the provision.

3.10.3 Assessment of progress

Finally, tutors were asked how much weight they gave to various forms of evidence when assessing their students' progress. The items were identical to those in the question on planning students' progression in learning, above, and the results are shown in Table 3.23, in descending order of the response 'A great deal'.

Table 3.23: **Weight given by tutors to various forms of evidence in assessment**

Form of evidence	*Weight given in assessment*							
	A great deal		*Some*		*None*		*Total*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Continuous assessment	151	87%	20	12%	2	1%	173	100%
Student self-assessment negotiated with the tutor	113	67%	54	32%	2	1%	169	100%
Students' portfolios	108	64%	58	34%	4	2%	170	100%
How well students do on written assignments	92	46%	90	53%	2	1%	171	100%
How well students do in oral work	66	39%	97	57%	7	4%	172	100%
Tutor-made tests	43	25%	79	46%	50	29%	172	100%
Listening to students read aloud	40	23%	85	50%	46	27%	171	100%
Published tests	27	16%	72	42%	71	42%	170	100%

Note: The Total Ns and percentages are row totals, and the percentages in each row are based on the total N for that row.

The pattern of responses was very similar to that for planning progression in learning. The great majority of tutors gave continuous assessment most weight. In particular, almost all gave student self-assessment and students' portfolios, written assignments and oral work some or a great deal of weight for both purposes. Although just over two fifths of respondents gave no weight to published tests for assessment, and about three in ten gave no weight to tests they devised or to listening to students read aloud, still a majority gave some or a great deal of weight to these forms of evidence. Thus again the overall picture was of a blend of practices, with heavy reliance on easily available forms of evidence.

3.11 Summary

- **Adult basic skills is a largely part-time and very largely female profession. Tutors are predominantly qualified in Arts subjects and mostly teach small groups a few hours per week.**

- Adult literacy tutors seemed to keep largely up to date in terms of attending courses and reading books relevant to students' needs, but the writers on literacy who were most familiar to them had produced their most influential work some time ago.
- Overall, professional development and management support for tutors appeared patchy, and this was consistent with one of the findings of the Moser Report.
- It seemed that appropriate use was being made of classroom assistants, where they were available. No explanation was available of why nearly two fifths of tutors had no assistance.
- Tutors rated the ethos of their teaching as somewhat more important than attention to the practical skills of reading and writing, but the published materials they used, and those they devised themselves, did seem to address those skills directly.
- The overall impression of teaching was one of flexibility and individual initiative. This could be seen either as professionalism or as 'winging it'.

Chapter 4

What were the students like?

This chapter provides information on the student sample based mainly on the Student Profile (see Appendix C), supplemented by evidence from the students' hours of literacy tuition between pre- and post-test, a comparison of the students' performance with that of a national sample of 9-year-olds, and two items from the tutor questionnaire.

4.1 Characteristics of the sample

The Student Profile gathered information on students' gender, age, ethnicity, first and any other languages, occupational status and highest qualification, on whether they had been in basic skills tuition before the academic year 1998/99, on the form(s) of provision which they were attending in that year, and on the modes of teaching they were experiencing. Profiles were returned on 1,915 students, or 90 per cent of those who took the reading pre-test. The information for the full sample is shown in Table 4.1, and details for the intensive students on two of the variables are given below the Table.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of the sample of students

	N	%
Total	1915	100
Sex		
Men	819	45
Women	1023	56
Total	1842	100
no information	73	

Age		
50+	280	17
40-49	336	20
30-39	483	29
20-29	325	19
under 20	248	15
Total	**1672**	**100**
no information	243	

Occupational status		
Full-time employed	265	15
Part-time employed	215	12
Full-time self-employed	16	1
Part-time self-employed	15	1
Unemployed	465	26
Full-time education	174	10
Temporarily sick/disabled	52	3
Permanently sick/disabled	149	8
Looking after home/family	288	16
Other	163	9
Total	**1802**	**100**
no information	113	

Highest qualification		
None	940	50
A Basic Skills certificate	124	7
CSE/GCSE	269	14
O-Level	29	2
FE	475	25
A-Level	16	1
Higher education	38	2
Total	**1891**	**100**
no information	24	

Ethnicity		
White	1556	84
Black – Caribbean	82	4
Black – African	22	1
Black – Other	7	<1
Indian	28	2
Pakistani	57	3
Bangladeshi	14	1
Chinese	17	1
Other	79	4
Total	**1862**	**100**
no information	53	

First language		
English	1510	82
Other	334	18
Total	**1844**	**100**
no information	71	

Languages other than English (Percentages not given because of small numbers)		
Sign	10	
Esperanto	1	
French	25	
French-based Creole	2	
Spanish	17	
Portuguese	4	
Italian	5	
Welsh	17	
German	12	
Russian	8	
Slovak	4	
Polish	1	
Serbo-Croatian	3	
Greek	10	
Kurdish	1	
Farsi	4	
Pushto	2	
Urdu	31	

	N	%
Punjabi	28	
Hindi	3	
Bengali/Bangla/Sylheti	17	
Gujerati	11	
Tamil	7	
Sinhalese	1	
Albanian	1	
Arabic	16	
Assyrian	1	
Turkish	9	
Wolof	1	
Twi	3	
Ga	1	
Ashanti	1	
Yoruba	1	
Ibo	4	
Kiswahili	3	
Somali	1	
Chinese (Cantonese or Mandarin)	18	
Japanese	6	
Cambodian	1	
Korean	1	
Tagalog/Filipino	2	
Fijian	1	
Total	296	
no information	36	

Previous basic skills tuition		
None	639	36
In 1998 only	419	24
In 1997 or earlier	709	40
Total	**1767**	**100**
no information	148	

Forms of provision being attended in 1998/99 (N.B. Percentages do not total to 100 because more than one category could be ticked)		
Primary purpose literacy/ literacy & numeracy	1357	88
Literacy/numeracy *support*	273	18
Adult Training (Training for Work)	100	7
Workplace training	52	3
Training via Youth Credits	22	1
Family literacy	17	1
Total of responses	**1821**	
Total of respondents	**1543**	**100**
no information	372	

Modes of teaching being experienced in 1998/99 (N.B. Percentages do not total to 100 because more than one category could be ticked)		
Group tuition	869	68
One-to-one provision in College/ Centre with tutor PLUS volunteer support	282	22
Open learning	240	19
One-to-one provision in College/ Centre with tutor	238	19
Drop-in	148	12
Total of responses	**1777**	
Total of respondents	**1276**	**100**
no information	639	

Of the 206 intensive students for whom Profiles were returned, 107 (53 per cent) were men and 95 (47 per cent) were women (information was not provided for four people). Also, 108 (53 per cent) had never been in basic skills provision before, 55 (27 per cent) had attended in the previous year only, and 40 (20 per cent) had attended in 1997 or earlier (there was no information on 18 people).

Thus in the full sample there were significantly more women than men (but there were slightly more men among the intensive students), a wide range of ages (up to 80+), and a balance of occupational statuses. A great many of the students were monolingual English-speaking white people with few or no qualifications. The range of other languages spoken covered the globe; perhaps the most unusual item in the list was that 10 students gave Sign as their first language. Just over a third of the students in the full sample were new to basic skills provision, but many more had attended for at least one year previously, and some for many years – one fieldworker met a student who had been attending the same group for 17 years. The proportion of new students was much higher, and the proportion of long-term students was much lower, among the intensive students.

The large numbers for whom no information was given on forms of provision and modes of teaching were probably due to the structure of that section of the Profile, where these two topics were not distinguished. It may be suspected that most of those with no entry for a form of provision were actually attending primary-purpose provision; similarly, that most of those with no entry for a mode of teaching were actually receiving group tuition. However, using the information that was available, it was possible to estimate that 223 (14 per cent) out of 1,543 students were attending more than one form of provision – but cf. the tutor questionnaire information in section 4.4. (The proportion receiving more than one mode of teaching was not calculated because of the large amount of missing information.)

4.2 Hours of tuition

The distribution of number of hours of literacy tuition attended between pre- and post-test is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: **Distribution of hours of literacy tuition between pre- and post-test**

Number of hours	*Number of students*	*%*
more than 60	164	17
51-60	172	18
41-50	89	9
31-40	154	16
21-30	192	20
20 or less	211	21
Total	**982**	**100**

No information on hours of tuition was returned for 242 students for whom pre- and post-test reading data were received. The quite large groups with small numbers of hours were mainly students whose pre- and post-tests were not many weeks apart, or who were attending combined literacy and numeracy provision.

4.3 Comparisons with school-level attainment

The tests used in the adult literacy study contained 22 tasks and 70 items (questions). Within these, three tasks (12 items) were drawn from those used in the 1991 IEA Reading Literacy Study, Population A (9-year-olds) (Elley, 1992), and also used in the 1996 replication of that study with Year 4 pupils in England and Wales

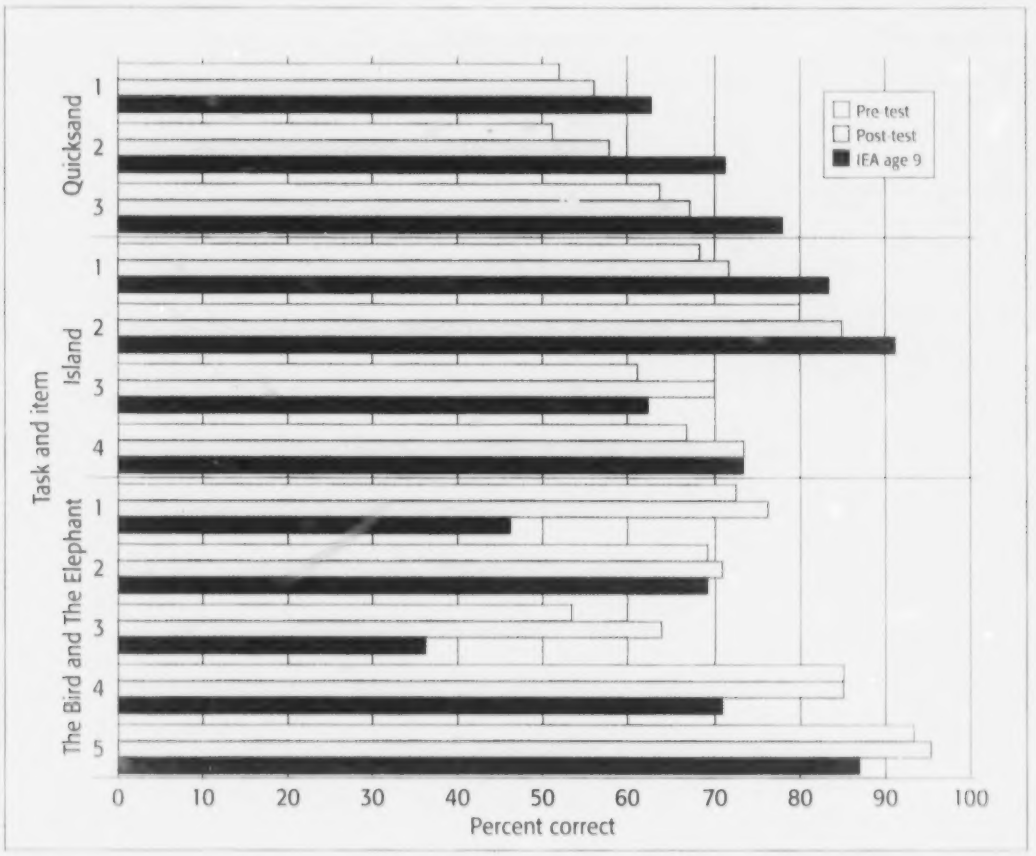
(Brooks *et al.*, 1996). Though these tasks were designed for 9-year-olds, their content was not so juvenile that they would have been inappropriate for adults. One of the three tasks *(The Bird and the Elephant)* provided the only narrative text used in this study. Another *(Island)* was a map-reading task of a sort familiar to many adult literacy students aiming for Wordpower accreditation. And Quicksand was of a familiar factual/expository genre.

In the 1996 Year 4 study, the sample of children was nationally representative, and in particular covered the entire range of attainment. The IEA tasks and items used in the present study therefore provided a comparison between the performance of adults with poor literacy and Y4 pupils across the full ability range. The relevant data are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: **Comparative performance of adults and 9-year-olds on IEA Reading Literacy Study tasks**

Task & question	*IEA data*		*Adult literacy data*			
			Pre-test		*Post-test*	
	N	*% correct*	*N*	*% correct*	*N*	*% correct*
Quicksand						
1	917	62	594	52	295	56
2	917	71	594	51	295	57
3	917	78	594	64	295	67
Island						
1	900	83	495	69	336	71
2	900	91	495	80	336	85
3	900	62	495	61	336	70
4	900	73	495	67	336	73
The Bird and the Elephant						
1	900	46	559	72	283	76
2	900	69	559	69	283	71
3	900	36	559	54	283	64
4	900	71	559	85	283	85
5	900	86	559	93	283	95

Figure 4.1: Comparative performance of adults and 9-year-olds on IEA Reading Literacy Study Tasks



Because of various aspects of the design of the study (see Appendix B), the six sets of adult data in Table 4.3 (three tasks by two occasions of testing) were all provided by different groups of students. No student took all 12 items, and it was therefore not possible to produce comparative 'totals' for adults and children. Also, each of the three tasks was taken by a different group of adults within each test stage, and those who took *The Bird and the Elephant* at either stage had distinctly better literacy attainment than those who took *Quicksand* and *Island*. However, the percentages of adults and children getting the various items right did permit comparisons.

In general, the percentages of adults getting items right on *Island* and especially on *Quicksand* were lower than the percentages of 9-year-olds who got them right; while the percentages of adults getting items right on *The Bird and the Elephant* were higher. Overall, therefore, the attainment of this sample of adults with poor literacy skills appeared to be similar to that of a full-range sample of 9-year-olds. In National Curriculum (NC) terms (cf. section E.2) this would put this sample of adults at NC level 2 on average.

4.4 Information from the tutor questionnaire

4.4.1 Students' literacy levels

Tutors were asked how many of their students were at each level of the BSA's Communication Standards, from below Entry up to level 3. Just over 40 tutors did not answer this question: the results for the rest are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: **Numbers of students judged by tutors to be at different levels of BSA Communication Standards**

Level	*Students*		*Number of tutors with students at this level*
	N	*%*	
3	68	5%	38
2	248	18%	100
1	504	36%	135
Entry	393	28%	127
Below Entry	156	11%	71
Total	**1411**	**100%**	

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding errors.

Thus tutors considered two fifths (39 per cent) of their students to have less than functional literacy (Entry level or below), and one in ten (11 per cent) to have very poor literacy (below Entry). Conversely, they considered three fifths (61 per cent) to be at or above the threshold of functional literacy (level 1 or above), and even one in twenty to be at or near the national average (level 3). These judgements seem somewhat generous when compared with the school-level comparisons reported in the previous section. Compared with the test data (see chapter 5) the students are also concentrated rather more in the middle of the scale. Both these findings are usual: human raters are reluctant to allocate many students to the extremes of a scale, and also exhibit what has been called 'generosity error'.

4.4.2 Other literacy tuition received by tested group

In their questionnaire, tutors were asked whether any students in their tested group were receiving other adult literacy teaching during the course of the week and, if so, how many. A total of 96 tutors (56 per cent of the 171 who answered this question) said their students were receiving other teaching, and between them reported 357

students (about a quarter of the relevant sample) as receiving other teaching. This was nearly double the proportion estimated from the Student Profile information – see section 4.1.

In either case, only a minority of students attended more than one form of provision, and it therefore seems that most students received just a few hours' provision per week. Information from the tutor questionnaire, the fieldworkers' impressions, and the data on hours of literacy tuition received by students between pre- and post-test, combined to suggest that the provision attended by the majority of students was non-intensive – a few hours a week over many months (and even years). However, in section 6.2 it will be shown that some students who attended more regularly made better progress in reading.

4.5 Summary

The sample of students in this study:

- contained significantly more women than men (in the full sample, but among the intensive students there were slightly more men than women);
- represented a range of ages and occupational statuses;
- contained minorities of people for whom English was an additional language, and of ethnicities other than white;
- were mostly poorly qualified;
- had mostly attended basic skills provision before (in the full sample; among the intensive students just over half were new to adult literacy provision), and a minority were attending more than one form of provision in 1998/99;
- mostly received more than 30 hours of tuition between pre- and post-test;
- had reading levels quite similar, on average, to a national sample of 9-year-olds;
- were judged by their tutors to range from very weak to about the national average, with a majority already above Entry level.

Chapter 5

How much progress did the students make?

5.1 Reading – norm-referenced results

The overall norm-referenced results for reading, on the IALS scale (mean 300, standard deviation 50), are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Norm-referenced reading results

		Full sample	*Intensives*
N		*1224*	*196*
Pre-test	Mean	214.3	237.8
	(s.d.)	(76.8)	(70.4)
	percentile	19th	30th
Post-test	Mean	225.4	246.3
	(s.d.)	(72.1)	(65.0)
	percentile	22nd	31st
Gain		11.1	8.5
Significance		$p<0.001$	$p<0.01$
Effect size		0.22	0.17

Key: N = sample size; mean = average score; s.d. = standard deviation

Note: The effect sizes were calculated by dividing the gain by the s.d. of the reporting scale (50).

The standard deviations were large, indicating a very wide dispersal of scores (see also the next section). The intensive students had distinctly higher average scores at both pre- and post-test than the full sample, and their smaller gain (shown particularly in the percentile data) was largely due to their having less room to show improvement.

Though the gains for both the full sample and the intensive students were statistically significant, this was partly because of the large sample sizes. Both gains were small, in absolute terms, and the effect sizes indicated what in an intervention study would be considered marginal effectiveness (the rule of thumb is that an effect size needs to be at least 0.25 to indicate educational significance). However, the Progress study at least was not an intervention study but what its name implies, a study of progress. Therefore the gain observed is what it was intended to discover. And that gain can be characterised as undramatic but worthwhile.

5.2 Reading – criterion-referenced results

Unsurprisingly (since the same data underlay both sets of results), the criterion-referenced results told the same story. The distributions of results on the IALS levels at pre- and post-test are shown in Table 5.2 for the full sample and in Table 5.3 for the intensive students. In both cases, the upper part of the table shows only the IALS levels, while the lower part subdivides IALS Level 1 according to sub-levels 3, 2 and 1 of New Standards Entry Level.

Information provided by the devisers of the New Standards showed that the Entry Level/Level 1 boundary in those standards had been aligned with the IALS Level 1/Level 2 boundary. For the purposes of this study, it was further assumed that boundaries further up the two scales had also been aligned, as follows:

New Standards boundaries	*IALS boundaries*
Level 2/Level 3	Level 3/Level 4
Level 1/Level 2	Level 2/Level 3
Entry Level/Level 1	Level 1/Level 2

Each of these levels was one IALS standard deviation (50 scale points) wide. IALS Level 1 had no subdivisions, but New Standards Entry Level was devised with three sub-levels. In order to estimate the proportions of students in this study falling into those sub-levels, the assumption about the 'width' of levels was also extrapolated downwards, that is, the top two of the three sub-levels within Entry Level were also treated as covering 50 scale points. Entry 1 then contained everyone below Entry 2.

Table 5.2: **Criterion-referenced reading results, full sample**

Score range	*IALS level*	*New Standards level*	*Pre-test*		*Post-test*	
			N	%	*N*	%
326-375	4	Level 3	14	1	29	2
276-325	3	Level 2	302	25	344	28
226-275	2	Level 1	320	26	324	27
225 or below	1	Entry Level	584	48	523	43
Total			**1220**	**100**	**1220**	**100**
Within IALS Level 1/New Standards Entry Level:						
176-225		Entry 3	237	19	239	20
126-175		Entry 2	145	12	151	12
125 or below		Entry 1	202	17	133	11

Table 5.3: **Criterion-referenced reading results, intensive students**

Score range	*IALS level*	*New Standards level*	*Pre-test*		*Post-test*	
			N	%	*N*	%
326-375	4	Level 3	3	2	5	3
276-325	3	Level 2	70	35	74	37
226-275	2	Level 1	56	28	58	29
225 or below	1	Entry Level	69	35	61	31
Total			**198**	**100**	**198**	**100**
Within IALS Level 1/New Standards Entry Level:						
176-225		Entry 3	41	21	38	19
126-175		Entry 2	13	7	10	5
125 or below		Entry 1	15	8	13	7

The distributions again confirmed that the intensive students started and finished with rather better attainment than the full sample, and that students' attainments were very diverse. Curiously, there were some students with pre-test scores above the national and international mean of 300, and therefore with reading skills

apparently above the average for the population. Table 5.2 also shows that just over half the full sample (52 per cent) were already above IALS Level 1/ New Standards Entry Level at pre-test, and Table 5.3 shows that this was particularly true of intensive students (65 per cent). This skew in the reading results towards the upper part of the range suggests that many students in the sample already had reasonable reading skills. However, 48 per cent of the full sample, and 35 per cent of intensive students, had less than functional literacy at pre-test, and sections 5.6-7 will suggest that many students had weaker writing than reading.

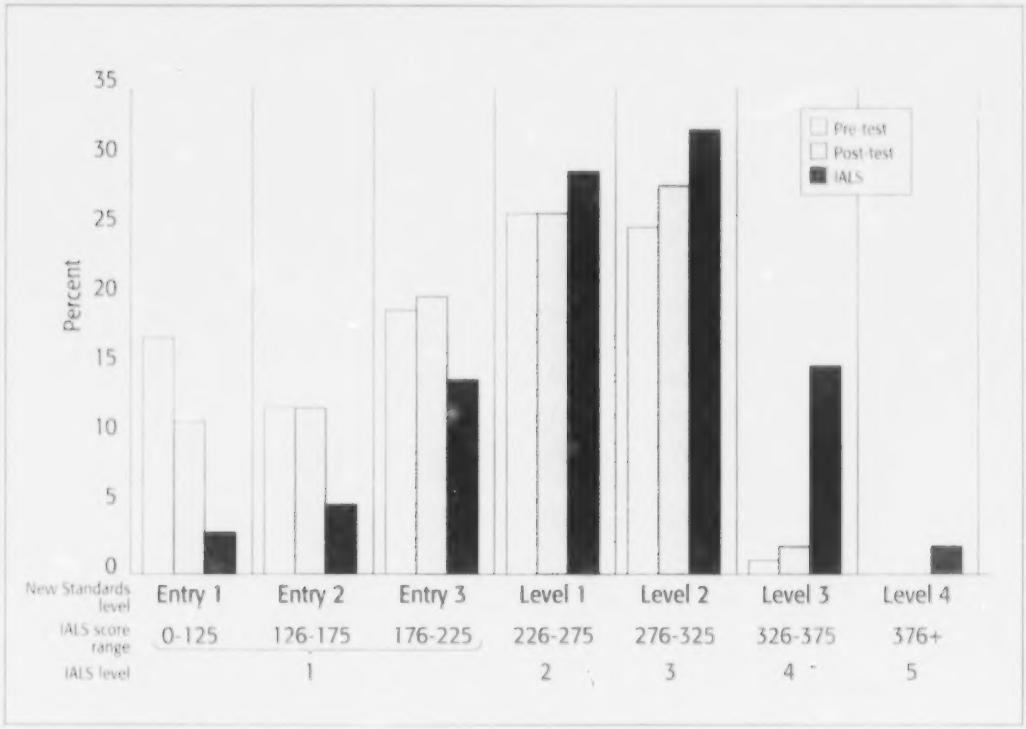
At the lower end of the range, there were just over 200 students with pre-test scores of 125 or below (more than 3.5 standard deviations below the mean). To this extent, the tests had succeeded in 'creating the lower rungs of the ladder' (but see below).

Another perspective on the criterion-referenced results for the full sample is given in Figure 5.1. Here, the distributions of pre- and post-test criterion-referenced scores are shown for each New Standards level and sub-level from Entry 1 up to Level 3, with the national distribution shown for comparison. The national distribution is a composite of the Prose and Document Literacy scales reported in Carey et al. (1997), but is more detailed than the data given by Carey et al. because it is based on the unpublished raw scores.

Figure 5.1 shows that, as already discussed, quite a high proportion of students in this study already had pre-test scores above New Standards Entry Level. However, it also shows that the proportion of students in this study with scores within New Standards Entry Level was substantially higher than in the population, especially at Entry 1.

Thus many of the students in this study were among those in greatest need. However, it has been estimated (Brooks et al., 2000, chapter 6) that the total number of adults in adult literacy provision is about 4 per cent of those estimated to have literacy skills within IALS Level 1/New Standards Entry Level and therefore thought to be in need. If the adults in this study are representative of all those in provision, then this suggests that the proportion of those in greatest need who are in provision is actually lower still – perhaps only 2 per cent.

Figure 5.1: **Pre- and Post-test criterion-referenced reading results compared with national (IALS) distribution**



5.3 Comparisons with school-level results and tutors' judgements

Comparing the overall reading results with the school-level data presented in chapter 4 would not yield any further information, because the items taken from school-level tests were a subset of those on which the overall criterion-referenced results were based.

However, it is possible, but difficult, to compare the attainment data in Table 5.2 with the tutor report data in Table 4.4. The difficulty is that the scales used, though labelled similarly, were in fact different. When the tutors were asked to give their estimates, the question was put in terms of the Basic Skills Agency's Communication Standards, which were then the only ones current; but by the time the criterion-referencing reported in this chapter was carried out, the new Basic Skills Standards had become available in draft (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1999), and these were used for the criterion-referencing. The new Standards were aligned with the IALS levels and, as pointed out by Carey *et al.* (1997, p.17), the level boundaries in IALS were slightly but significantly higher than those in the BSA Standards.

That said, the attainment data here and the tutor report data in Chapter 4 provided rather different 'averages' (the tutor judgements being somewhat higher), but similar pictures of the overall *range* of attainment: a heterogeneous group of adults with skills ranging from extremely poor to about (or even just above) the national average, the majority having at least functional literacy.

It might therefore be wondered why so many people with apparently adequate skills were in adult literacy provision. Sketchy answers were available from the fieldworkers' impressions. At least a few of the tested groups of students were attending courses with a specific focus on ICT, and pre-test attainment in those groups seemed particularly high: perhaps some of these students were attending more to acquire ICT skills than because their literacy needing improvement. Many adults with level 1 literacy appeared to go on attending in order to maintain their skills, perhaps particularly their (probably weaker) writing: some might have felt that without continuing support their hard-won skills might deteriorate again.

5.4 Movement between levels

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 both showed a modest amount of progress, on average. This is confirmed by the data shown in Tables 5.4-6. All the results in those Tables suggest considerable 'turbulence' within the samples – but this is usual in studies of this kind. That is, every instrument for measuring reading attainment has some degree of unreliability – if a group of students were re-tested the next day on the same instrument a proportion of them would score differently, some because they remember or work out an answer they got wrong the day before, others because they forget or mistakenly change one they got right, etc. Moreover, in this study no student saw the same questions at pre- and post-test, so that two sources of unreliability come into play. However, here the correlation between the pre- and post-test scores for the full sample was 0.75, which is reasonable given the small number of items which any one student took at either stage (maximum of 24 or 26).

Table 5.4 shows the numbers of students whose score did or did not change between pre- and post-test by at least a quarter of a standard deviation (±12.5 points) on the IALS scale – a quarter of a standard deviation is considered to be the minimum change that is educationally significant. On this criterion, distinctly more students improved significantly than fell behind.

Table 5.4: **Numbers of students who moved ±12.5 IALS scale points or stayed within that range**

	Full sample		*Intensives*	
	N	%	*N*	%
Moved up at least 12.5 points	606	50	93	47
Stayed within ±12.5 points	247	20	41	21
Moved down at least 12.5 points	357	30	62	32
Total	**1210**	**100**	**196**	**100**

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show (for the full sample and intensive students respectively) the numbers of students who did or did not move between levels of the New Standards. The numbers in bold on the diagonals are students who remained at the same level; those to the right of the diagonal are students who fell at least one level; and those to the left rose at least one level. Again, considerably more students improved than fell behind.

Table 5.5: **Numbers of students who moved between levels of the New Standards or stayed at the same level, full sample**

	Pre-test level						
	Entry 1	*Entry 2*	*Entry 3*	*Level 1*	*Level 2*	*Level 3*	*Total*
Post-test level							
Level 3	1	0	2	7	19	**0**	29
Level 2	6	5	41	114	**166**	12	344
Level 1	12	25	76	**121**	89	1	324
Entry 3	27	57	**78**	55	22	0	239
Entry 2	55	**40**	34	20	2	0	151
Entry 1	**101**	18	6	3	4	1	133
Total	202	145	237	320	302	14	1220

In the **full sample**, in terms of New Standards levels (including sub-levels of Entry Level):

- 447 students (37%) moved up at least one level
- of these, 126 (10%) moved up 2 or more levels
- 506 (41%) stayed on the same level
- 267 (22%) dropped at least one level
- of these, 59 (5%) dropped 2 or more levels.

Table 5.6: **Numbers of students who moved between levels of the New Standards or stayed the same, intensive students**

	Pre-test level						
	Entry 1	*Entry 2*	*Entry 3*	*Level 1*	*Level 2*	*Level 3*	*Total*
Post-test level							
Level 3	0	0	0	0	5	0	5
Level 2	0	1	5	23	42	3	74
Level 1	1	1	15	25	16	0	58
Entry 3	1	9	14	7	7	0	38
Entry 2	3	2	4	1	0	0	10
Entry 1	10	0	3	0	0	0	13
Total	6	10	45	101	36	3	198

Of the **intensive students**, in terms of New Standards levels (including sub-levels of Entry Level):

- 64 (32%) moved up at least one level
- of these, 9 (5%) moved up 2 or more levels
- 93 (47%) stayed on the same level
- 41 (21%) dropped at least one level
- of these, 10 (5%) dropped 2 or more levels.

5.5 What could students at each reading level do?

Tabulating the percentages of students who were at each level on the IALS/New Standards scale gives no sense of what tasks students at different levels could or could not achieve in terms of reading. In IALS, student performance at each level was characterised in terms of what students at that level had an 80 per cent probability of being able to do. Therefore listing items which students at a level had an 80 per cent probability of being able to do gave a general impression of the kinds of literacy skill which people at that level possessed. Inspection of the facility values for all the items in this study provided the lists in Table 5.7: the lists are cumulative from level to level.

Table 5.7: **What students at each level had an 80 per cent probability of being able to do**

Students in this study who had scores in the IALS Level 1/New Standards Entry Level range (225 or less) had an 80 per cent probability of being able to:

- ring dates on a calendar
- locate the amount of milk needed for a Custard recipe
- locate information in a note from a neighbour.

Students in this study who had scores in the IALS Level 2/New Standards Level 1 range (226-275) also had an 80 per cent probability of being able to:

- locate phone numbers
- locate the amount of sugar needed for a Custard recipe
- retrieve information about quicksand
- retrieve information about seedsticks
- retrieve information from a story about *The Bird and the Elephant*
- retrieve simple information from a notice about a meeting
- locate information in yellow pages
- answer questions about a simple map
- use a conversion table (gallons and litres)
- locate information in a charity advertisement (IALS Level 1, Prose)
- answer a simple question about a union ballot notice (IALS Level 1, Document)
- retrieve simple information from a medicine label (IALS Level 1, Prose)
- say why a Scrambled Eggs recipe calls for sugar (IALS Level 1, Prose)
- locate other information in a Scrambled Eggs recipe
- transcribe the distance from home to work for an employment application (IALS Level 1, Document)
- transcribe other simple information for an employment application (IALS Level 2, Document)
- underline information in a newspaper article (IALS Level 1, Prose)
- retrieve simple information from a newspaper article (IALS Level 2, Prose)
- fill in the price and number of tickets required on a form for theatre tickets (IALS Level 1, Document)

- fill in the date and time on a form for theatre tickets (IALS Level 2, Document)
- answer a simple question about a Nuclear Waste chart (IALS Level 1, Document)
- answer other simple questions about charts (IALS Level 2, Document)
- retrieve single-point information about fighting fires (IALS Level 1, Prose).

Students in this study who had scores in the IALS Level 3/New Standards Level 2 range (276-325) also had an 80 per cent probability of being able to:

- locate which of three dates was relevant to a question about a union ballot notice
- choose the best title for a piece about quicksand
- make a simple inference from information about seedsticks
- make simple inferences from a story about *The Bird and the Elephant*
- locate the date of the lowest point in a chart (IALS Level 2, Document)
- make a simple inference for an employment application form (IALS Level 2, Document)
- make a difficult inference about a new law on fighting fires (IALS Level 2, Prose)
- retrieve two pieces of information about fighting fires (IALS Level 3, Prose)
- relate two pieces of information from a chart (IALS Level 3, Document)
- make an inference about information in a Nuclear Waste chart (IALS Level 3, Document).

Students in this study who had scores in the IALS Level 3/New Standards Level 2 range (276-325) had* less than an *80 per cent probability of being able to:

- state when a recipe said custard should be stirred
- combine and transform two pieces of information for an employment application form (IALS Level 3, Document)
- re-express one of seven points in a chart (IALS Level 3, Document)
- transcribe three pieces of information from a medicine label (IALS Level 3, Prose).

The first part of Table 5.7 shows that even students approaching the top of the New Standards Entry Level could generally cope with only a few items, these being very simple information-retrieval tasks. Students at Entry Levels 1 and 2 generally could not cope even with these items – and students at these levels were 29 per cent of the full sample at pre-test and 23 per cent at post-test. It would seem fair to say that none of the students below IALS Level 2/New Standards Level 1 had yet achieved functional literacy – and students at this level comprised 48 per cent of the full sample at pre-test and 43 per cent at post-test.

The very short list of items which students at IALS Level 1/New Standards Entry Level could generally manage suggests that, despite the success in achieving finer statistical discrimination at the lower end of the scale, **the 'lower rungs of the ladder' were still not numerous enough for the students with the lowest levels of literacy**. The implication is that, for the weakest students, there need to be 'very small steps' on which they can demonstrate progress.

Students at IALS Level 2/New Standards Level 1 could generally cope with a much wider range of information-retrieval items, including many where they had to write their own answers (those labelled as IALS items in Table 5.7), but not yet with items requiring inference or the relating of separate pieces of information – even the question about why a scrambled eggs recipe called for sugar required only the location of the relevant sentence in the recipe. Students at this level could be said to have largely achieved functional literacy – but not yet to be able to cope with more demanding literacy tasks. The 'turbulence' in the data mentioned above suggests, however, that many students who achieved IALS Level 2/New Standards Level 1 were not yet fully secure in their attainment of that level.

Students at IALS Level 3/New Standards Level 2 could generally cope with items requiring them to make inferences or relate separate pieces of information or distinguish relevant from distracting information – in other words, they had quite well developed reading skills. Since these students had scores only just below the national average their skill level was perhaps unsurprising – but their presence in, or need to attend, basic skills provision might be thought surprising. They may have been people who considered their existing near-average skills not yet good enough for their aspirations in life or employment, particularly, perhaps, their writing skills.

No attempt is made to characterise the performance of the very small number of students who scored at IALS Level 4/New Standards Level 3.

The last part of Table 5.7 shows the few tasks that even the highest-scoring students in the sample were generally not yet able to do – these were tasks requiring complex inferences or the interpretation of difficult text.

In the IALS study, adults who achieved scores at a particular level were by definition those who could generally manage the items whose facility values were also at that level. It might therefore be thought that the same would apply to the students in this study, where values on the IALS scale for non-IALS items were derived from those for IALS items via the performance of students taking samples of both sets of items. However, Table 5.7 shows that this was not necessarily the case. In the Table, tasks derived from IALS are labelled with their level and as

Prose or Document (this distinction is explained in Appendix B). The labelling by level reveals a curious aspect of the results: students in this study at the various IALS levels as shown by their scores were not necessarily generally able to cope with tasks which the IALS study itself showed could be managed by people at those levels within a nationally representative full-range sample:

- **students in this study with IALS Level 1 scores could not generally manage any of the IALS Level 1 tasks;**
- **students in this study with IALS Level 2 scores could generally manage all the IALS Level 1 tasks, but not all the Level 2 tasks;**
- **students in this study with IALS Level 3 scores could generally manage all the IALS Level 2 tasks, but not all the Level 3 tasks.**

This is an odd result. Students in this study exhibited different literacy behaviour than adults in the same part (mainly the lower half) of the national distribution: they achieved scores at a higher IALS level than their performance on the IALS items alone would have earned.

Part of the explanation may lie in the turbulence in the results already mentioned.

A possible, more general explanation of this pattern might relate to differential performance on the Prose and Document items. The difference in performance on the two classes of IALS items is not visible in the list above but only in the detailed item statistics (see Appendix E). The proportions of students in this study who produced the correct answers to IALS items were closer to the national proportions on Document than on Prose items. They could cope better with non-continuous texts (such as application forms for employment and for theatre tickets, and graphic information in charts) than with continuous texts (such as a dense piece about fighting fires, a newspaper article, etc.). Thus basic skills students seem to have learnt to cope better with the sorts of literacy skills that are also life skills, but not at all well with stretches of prose – which may require more sustained attention and more focused skills. It may also be that the students in this study are unrepresentative of adults in the lower half of the national distribution of literacy attainment in this disjunction of reading skills.

5.6 Results for writing

As described in Appendix F, the students' writing samples were analysed in terms of length (number of words), numbers of errors in various categories, and quality of handwriting. Somewhat surprisingly, no significant changes between pre-

and post-test were found for the error categories (Grammar, Style, Spelling and Other Orthographic Conventions), not even for the total number of errors per 100 words. Thus students on average did not improve their writing in terms of a reduction in errors or an increase in lexical or syntactic complexity. Results are therefore given only for length of script and quality of handwriting, and only for the full sample – see Tables 5.8 and 5.9.

The very small average increases, of two words in length of script and a small fraction of a point in quality of handwriting, were nevertheless statistically significant for the full sample. For the intensive students, there was a similar statistically significant increase in length of script, but not in quality of handwriting. Some students were evidently quite prolific writers, but the majority (56 per cent) produced 20 words or less at pre-test. Compared to the gains in reading, the improvements in writing seemed even more undramatic. The improvement in handwriting for the full sample was so marginal that it seems educationally insignificant (despite being statistically significant), but the increases in length of script seem worthwhile.

Table 5.8: Writing results: length of script, full sample

	Pre-test		*Post-test*		
Number of words written	*N*	%	*N*	%	
>80	20	2	20	2	
71-80	11	1	14	1	
61-70	23	2	21	2	
51-60	30	3	36	4	
41-50	50	5	73	8	
31-40	90	10	115	12	
21-30	187	20	198	21	
11-20	269	29	251	27	
1-10	205	22	164	18	
0	51	5	45	5	
Total	**937**	**100**	**937**	**100**	
Mean	23.0		25.1		$p<0.003$
(s.d.)	(19.4)		(19.1)		

Table 5.9: **Writing results: quality of handwriting, full sample**

	Pre-test		*Post-test*		
Quality of handwriting	*N*	%	*N*	%	
3	563	69	590	72	
2	192	23	187	23	
1	66	8	44	5	
Total	**821**	**100**	**821**	**100**	
Mean	2.61		2.67		p<0.021
(s.d.)	(0.63)		(0.58)		

Note: The 116 students 'missing' from Table 5.9 relative to Table 5.8 were excluded from this analysis because their scripts were too short to permit the quality of handwriting to be reliably assessed.

5.7 Relationship between reading and writing results

Table 5.2 showed that many students in the full sample already had quite reasonable reading skills at pre-test. Table 5.8, on the other hand, showed that most students at pre-test wrote very brief scripts. This suggests that many students in adult literacy provision have greater problems with writing than with reading, and that there is a need for investigation of the reasons for the apparent discrepancy, and of the implications for teaching.

5.8 Summary

- **Finer statistical discrimination at the lower end of the reading assessment scale was achieved. However, there were still too few reading items which the very weakest students could manage.**
- ***Both the full sample and the intensive students achieved a small but statistically significant improvement in reading.***
- **The average improvement in reading for the full sample represented a move from the 19th to the 22nd percentile of the national distribution.**
- **The average improvement in reading for the intensive students represented a move from the 30th to the 31st percentile of the national distribution.**

- In reading, 48 per cent of the full sample were not reading at a functional level at pre-test, and within these 29 per cent had very low pre-test scores. However, just over half were already reading at functional level, and a few students were already above the national average. Even so, these findings suggest that an even smaller proportion of adults in greatest need of help with literacy are being reached than previously thought.
- The 'turbulence' seen in the results is an inherent aspect of all cognitive testing, but suggests that some students were not securely above the threshold of functional level.
- In the reading tests, students within Entry Levels 1 and 2 of the new Basic Skills Standards (29 per cent of the full sample) could not generally manage any of the test items.
- Students within Entry Level 3 of the new Basic Skills Standards could generally manage only a few very simple information-retrieval items.
- Students within Level 1 of the new Basic Skills Standards could generally manage all the information-retrieval reading items, but none requiring higher-order skills.
- Students within Level 2 of the new Basic Skills Standards could generally manage all the information-retrieval reading items and most of those requiring higher-order skills.
- Many students seemed to have developed coping strategies for reading non-continuous 'official'-type texts, but could cope less well with continuous texts such as newspaper articles. They may not be representative of adults in the lower half of the national distribution of reading skills in this respect.
- *Both the full sample and the intensive students achieved a very small but statistically significant improvement in writing in terms of length of script, and the full sample also in quality of handwriting. However, these were the only statistically significant findings for writing; no significant improvements were found in terms of reduction of errors or increase in complexity.*
- Many students in the sample seemed to have distinctly poorer writing than reading skills. This phenomenon needs to be investigated further, along with its implications for teaching.
- Several of these findings lead to the conclusion that many students' literacy attainments are uneven, between reading and writing, between types of reading material, and from one occasion to another.
- Some students seemed to attend as much to maintain their skills as to improve them.
- *The main finding was that students made average gains in both reading and writing that were undramatic but worthwhile.*

Chapter 6

What factors were associated with progress?

6.1 Few factors were discovered

In the search for factors which might be associated with different amounts of progress, the reading and writing results were related to the background variables from the Student Profiles, plus number of hours of tuition attended between pre- and post-test, and several items from the tutor questionnaire. The analyses against background variables and hours of tuition were done both for the full sample and for the subsample of intensive students, those against tutor questionnaire data just for the full sample.

Few factors related to differences in progress were discovered. The results for just the intensive students showed no statistically significant amounts of progress for subgroups either for reading or for writing. This was almost certainly due to the small numbers in each subcategory. However, no conclusions can be drawn from statistically non-significant differences, and results for the intensive students are therefore not reported here. (However, one possible factor relating to hours of tuition on intensive courses did emerge from the analyses for the full sample – see section 6.4).

6.2 Reading results against background variables, full sample

The reading results for the full sample against the major background variables are shown in Table 6.1. Results for individual languages other than English are not shown because the numbers in each subcategory were very small. Under qualifications, all subcategories other than 'none' have been collapsed into the category labelled 'some' because of small numbers. Results for varieties of provision attended and modes of teaching experienced in 1998/99 are also not shown, because some students were attending more than one form of provision, and some undoubtedly were experiencing more than one mode of teaching, even though the proportion could not be calculated (see chapter 4).

Table 6.1: **Norm-referenced reading results against background variables, full sample**

	N	*Pre-test*		*Post-test*		*Gain*	*p*
		Mean	*(s.d.)*	*Mean*	*(s.d.)*		
Gender							
Men	495	206.9	(78.6)	218.2	(70.2)	11.3	0.000
Women	603	223.2	(75.5)	232.7	(73.7)	9.5	0.000
Total	**1098**						
Age							
50+	200	205.9	(77.0)	216.6	(72.4)	10.7	0.016
40-49	215	215.3	(78.1)	225.4	(75.9)	10.1	0.013
30-39	290	227.2	(74.7)	235.8	(70.1)	8.6	0.015
20-29	167	210.5	(79.2)	222.9	(73.1)	12.6	0.002
under 20	136	222.8	(71.2)	233.0	(68.7)	10.2	0.027
Total	**1006**						
First language							
English	957	215.4	(78.6)	226.1	(72.7)	10.7	0.000
Other	130	210.7	(70.2)	225.5	(72.7)	14.8	0.015
Total	**1067**						
Occupational status							
Employed	284	222.4	(77.6)	232.7	(72.7)	10.3	0.005
Unemployed	284	208.3	(79.2)	216.8	(75.4)	8.5	0.021
F/T education	114	221.2	(69.8)	230.9	(69.4)	9.2	0.043
Sick/disabled	132	212.1	(76.8)	230.6	(66.1)	13.5	0.009
Looking after home/family	164	238.5	(66.7)	244.8	(67.2)	6.5	ns
Other	106	190.0	(84.5)	207.6	(83.8)	17.0	0.032
Total	**1084**						
Highest qualification							
None	537	202.9	(78.5)	220.9	(73.2)	13.0	0.000
Some	581	222.6	(74.7)	231.1	(70.7)	8.5	0.000
Total		**1118**					
Previous basic skills tuition							
None	590	239.8	(65.9)	248.7	(68.9)	9.9	0.004
In 1996 only	248	218.7	(77.2)	225.4	(69.5)	6.7	0.045
Earlier	466	193.2	(80.7)	206.0	(75.2)	12.8	0.000
Total	**1064**						

Key: N = sample size; mean = average score; s.d. = standard deviation; p = probability; ns = statistically non-significant

Note: The differing total Ns for subcategories are due to missing data.

Almost all the subgroup results for the full sample were statistically significant. Thus progress in reading was made by both men and women students, those of different age groups, those with English as first or an additional language, those in different occupational statuses (except those looking after home and family), those with some formal qualifications and those with none, and those with differing amounts of previous basic skills tuition. In brief, almost all subgroups benefited, on average.

In the case of those looking after home and family, the likeliest explanation of the lack of statistical significance was that this group already had a relatively high average score at pre-test (238.3), and the statistics of the instruments used meant that there was little room for their average score to increase.

6.3 Writing results against background variables

Pre- and post-test writing samples were returned for fewer students than reading tests. Also, some student's scripts were blank, or had notes attached saying they had been scribed by the tutor. Hence the substantially lower overall numbers of students in the analyses of writing than of reading.

All the analytic categories described in Appendix F (length of script; handwriting; errors per 100 words overall and for the subcategories Grammar, Style, Spelling and Other Orthographic Conventions) were investigated in relation to background variables. Very few statistically significant differences were found. Most of those that were found related to length of script, and the very few significant results for other variables formed no pattern. The only category of writing analysis reported here is therefore length of script, and the results against the major background variables for this aspect of writing for the full sample are shown in Table 6.2. Under qualifications, all subcategories other than 'none' have again been collapsed into the category labelled 'some' because of small numbers.

Table 6.2: Writing (length of script) results against background variables, full sample

	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Gain	p
		Mean	(s.d.)	Mean	(s.d.)		
Gender							
Men	364	22.1	(18.9)	24.5	(18.0)	2.4	0.019
Women	433	26.4	(19.3)	27.8	(19.2)	1.4	ns
Total	797						
Age							
50+	148	24.6	(20.0)	22.9	(16.4)	−1.7	ns
40-49	162	24.4	(20.2)	27.9	(20.6)	3.5	0.040
30-39	205	23.6	(17.0)	27.3	(16.8)	3.7	0.007
20-29	117	24.3	(18.8)	29.4	(22.2)	5.1	0.023
under 20	113	25.2	(20.5)	24.8	(17.1)	−0.4	ns
Total	745						
First language							
English	696	24.8	(19.6)	26.5	(19.0)	1.7	0.030
Other	89	21.7	(18.0)	25.3	(18.2)	3.6	ns
Total	785						
Occupational status							
Employed	203	22.1	(19.0)	26.9	(19.2)	4.8	0.002
Unemployed	193	23.9	(19.0)	26.3	(18.8)	2.4	ns
F/t education	94	28.5	(21.5)	23.7	(16.8)	−4.8	0.025
Sick/disabled	96	22.9	(20.8)	26.2	(20.6)	3.3	ns
Looking after home/family	117	25.0	(16.0)	29.2	(19.0)	4.2	0.028
Other	82	26.7	(21.2)	24.9	(17.7)	−1.8	ns
Total	785						
Qualifications							
None	380	23.5	(19.0)	25.5	(18.7)	2.0	ns
Some	427	25.4	(19.6)	27.1	(18.9)	1.7	ns
Total	807						
Previous basic skills tuition							
None	247	26.0	(19.3)	28.7	(18.7)	2.7	ns
In 1998 only	187	26.4	(22.2)	27.5	(19.8)	1.3	ns
Earlier	338	22.8	(18.1)	24.1	(17.8)	1.3	ns
Total	772						

Key: N = sample size; mean = average score; s.d. = standard deviation; p = probability; ns = statistically non-significant

Note: The differing totals for subcategories are due to missing data.

The overall increase in length of script was so small (see section 5.6) that it is not surprising that few subgroups showed statistically significant differences between pre- and post-test. The significant differences that were found fell into no discernible pattern.

6.4 Reading and writing results by hours of tuition

The results against hours of literacy tuition attended between pre- and post-test are shown in Table 6.3 for reading and Table 6.4 for writing.

Table 6.3: Norm-referenced reading results against hours of tuition, full sample

Hours of tuition	*N*	*Pre-test*		*Post-test*		*Gain*	*p*
		Mean	*(s.d.)*	*Mean*	*(s.d.)*		
more than 60	164	197.8	(79.4)	217.1	(74.2)	19.3	0.000
51-60	172	195.9	(71.8)	219.7	(68.0)	23.8	0.000
41-50	89	228.6	(73.0)	236.4	(62.6)	7.8	ns
31-40	154	214.6	(70.1)	225.5	(63.2)	10.9	0.015
21-30	192	206.1	(83.9)	227.9	(76.8)	21.8	0.000
20 or less	211	204.9	(79.6)	222.6	(75.1)	17.7	0.000
Total	982						

Key: N = sample size; mean = average score; s.d. = standard deviation; p = probability; ns = statistically non-significant

Table 6.4: Writing results (length of script) against hours of tuition, full sample

Hours of tuition	*N*	*Pre-test*		*Post-test*		*Gain*	*p*
		Mean	*(s.d.)*	*Mean*	*(s.d.)*		
more than 60	114	30.6	(23.6)	28.7	(18.6)	−1.9	ns
51-60	49	22.3	(17.7)	21.5	(14.8)	−0.8	ns
41-50	56	28.5	(21.0)	23.7	(15.6)	−4.8	ns
31-40	92	23.4	(16.6)	27.1	(18.5)	3.7	ns
21-30	121	19.3	(15.5)	22.3	(14.9)	4.0	ns
20 or less	128	21.6	(17.5)	24.0	(17.1)	2.4	ns
Total	560						

Key: N = sample size; mean = average score; s.d. = standard deviation; p = probability; ns = statistically non-significant

The numbers of students in the subgroups for writing were evidently too small to allow statistically significant differences to emerge. For reading all the subgroups except one made significant progress, and the lack of statistical significance in that case was again almost certainly due to the small number involved. Within the reading data the largest average improvement was shown by the 51-60 hours of tuition group. Given that the maximum number of teaching weeks between pre- and post-test was about 20, students in this group must have attended very regularly. This group's average gain was 23.8 scale points. **This was the largest subgroup gain in the study and, at nearly half a standard deviation, probably the most educationally significant. Also, since the students on intensive courses for definition attended regularly, the finding on the benefit of regular attendance suggests that intensive courses could be particularly effective.**

6.5 Reading gains against tutor questionnaire variables

No analyses were done of writing gains against tutor questionnaire information because the only writing gains that were significant overall were length of script and quality of handwriting. There seemed little interest or point in relating tutors' responses to either of these.

Because of the circumstances in which the tutor questionnaires were distributed, no system could be set up for relating individual tutors' responses to the scores of students in their tuition groups. So all the analyses in this section were based on averaging the responses of tutors within providers, and then relating those averaged responses to average reading gains of students within relevant providers.

It proved possible to relate tutor responses to reading gain data for 1051 students – this was 86 per cent of all those for whom reading gain data were available.

Many items from the tutor questionnaire could not be meaningfully related to reading gains, mainly because of imbalances in the questionnaire responses. For instance, so few tutors did not have a qualification for teaching basic skills that analysing reading gains against whether tutors did or did not have such a qualification would inevitably have produced a non-significant result. In some other cases, reading gains could not be related to tutor questionnaire variables because of overlaps in the response categories.

A total of 17 items on the tutor questionnaire were therefore identified which, in the project director's judgement, would be central to the interpretation of the overall gains if they showed significant effects, and reading gains were statistically related to these items. Only two of these produced statistically

significant findings. Because of this, and to avoid a 'fishing expedition' for isolated results which might attain statistical significance by chance, the search for relationships between reading gains and tutor questionnaire variables was terminated at that point. Table 6.5 lists the factors which produced non-significant findings. In each case the question number in the tutor questionnaire (Appendix D) is given for reference.

Table 6.5: **Items from tutor questionnaire which yielded non-significant results against reading gains**

- tutors having a degree or not, basic skills qualification or not (q.1.2)
- tutors' years of teaching experience (q.1.4)
- frequency of students' access to IT (q.3.8)
- percentage of teaching time in which tutors used textbooks, etc., or their own materials (qs.3.10 & 3.12)
- the amount of management support for tutors (q.5.1)
- the frequency of formal and informal staff meetings (qs.5.2 & 5.3)
- whether tutors followed a defined curriculum or a scheme of work (qs.6.1 & 6.3)
- the basis of the curriculum or scheme of work (qs.6.2 & 6.4)
- aspects of tutors' planning of their teaching and assessment (q.6.5)
- aspects of literacy included in scheme of work (q.7.1)
- teaching individuals versus small groups (q.7.2)
- perceived importance of factors in students' progress (q.7.4).

Care is needed in the interpretation of the evidence summarised in Table 6.5. Factors for which no statistically significant association was found may still be important – it may just have been that the statistics did not pick this up on this occasion.

The only two items which did produce statistically significant findings were **whether tutors had volunteers and/or paid assistants** (q.4.1) and **whether all tutors in an area had qualified teacher status** (QTS) (q.1.2). The classroom assistance item required only a Yes/No response from each tutor, but the analysis nevertheless had to be in terms of three categories: All tutors, Some tutors, No tutors. This is because tutors' responses had to be averaged within providers (because of the impossibility, already mentioned, of relating individual tutors' responses to their students' scores). The Some tutors category therefore represented providers where more than one

tutor responded and their answers were not all either positive or negative. The results on this variable are shown in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Reading gains by proportion of tutors with classroom support

Proportion of tutors with support	*N of students*	*Pre-test*		*Post-test*		*Gain*
		Average (s.d.)		*Average (s.d.)*		
All tutors	415	214.5	(77.3)	230.3	(72.1)	15.8
Some tutors	486	208.6	(77.6)	220.0	(70.7)	11.4
No tutors	150	237.0	(63.0)	237.3	(63.4)	0.3
Total	1051					

The result was statistically significant, p=0.013. Students in providers where no tutors had support made virtually no average gain. Though it may seem obvious that tutors having classroom help would enable students to make better progress, this finding gives that belief statistical backing.

For the QTS item it was found that all providers had at least some tutors with QTS, so the analysis was in terms of providers where all tutors had QTS versus those where not all tutors had QTS. The results on this variable are shown in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Reading gains by whether all tutors had QTS or not

Proportion of tutors with QTS	N of students	Pre-test		Post-test		Gain
		Average (s.d.)		Average (s.d.)		
All tutors	512	214.1	(73.8)	231.2	(66.7)	17.1
Some tutors	530	214.8	(78.4)	224.2	(71.9)	9.4
Total	1042					

The result was statistically significant, p=0.02. Students in providers where all tutors had QTS made more gain on average than those elsewhere. This would appear to support the case for the professionalisation of the adult literacy teaching force.

6.6 Insights from interviews with basic skills co-ordinators

When the main data analyses were complete, the reading and writing results were further analysed according to providers, in order to see whether students in some providers' areas made statistically significant progress. In most cases, the number of

students tested in an area was too small to yield a significant result, and this must be borne in mind in interpreting the opinions reported in this section. However, in no case did the students in a particular area make a statistically significant *loss*, and in seven cases students in particular areas did make statistically significant progress. The Basic Skills Co-ordinators in those seven providers were contacted and interviewed by telephone – but were not told the basis of selection. This stage of the project was an attempt to glean qualitative insights into what made the provision for which these co-ordinators were responsible, particularly effective.

Most of the picture was as would be expected. Most provision was based on the teaching of groups of students (though there was much individualisation of teaching within group provision). All the providers catered for special groups of learners, worked in partnership with a range of organisations, derived the bulk of their funding from the FEFC, and set City and Guilds 9281 as the minimum qualification for tutors. Most tutors were part-time – in fact, in one of these seven providers all the adult literacy staff were part-time. Students' progress was monitored in partnership with them, and a range of external accreditation systems was used. Student-centred learning, widening participation, empowerment and individual progression were the keynotes of these co-ordinators' philosophy. The predominant factor in students' success was said to be that staff should have training and the relevant attitude towards students – understand their needs and be committed to meeting them, both academically and emotionally.

If there was a stronger than expected theme in the interviews, it was the apparently more detailed attention given to staff induction and development. In all seven areas professional support was given through appraisal systems with a development officer or through training courses – one-off training days and workshops on a range of areas including PowerPoint and teaching styles, dyslexia awareness and diagnosis, the new basic skills standards, and information and learning technology. Guidance for staff on materials and methods was provided both through formal sessions and informally. Tutors were recommended to use both commercial and in-house materials. In several areas less experienced staff, especially newcomers, shadowed or were mentored by an established colleague. All of this would appear to support the case for stronger professional development for adult literacy tutors.

6.7 Summary

- **Very few factors associated with differential progress were discovered.**
- **For reading, attendance at 51-60 hours of tuition had the strongest association with progress. Since regular attendance over several months would have been needed for students to attend this number of hours of tuition between pre- and post-test, the data suggested that *very regular attendance was associated with greater progress.***

- Since the students on intensive courses attended regularly, this suggests that intensive courses could be particularly effective.
- For reading, the only other factors found to have a positive relationship with students' gains were tutors having assistance in the classroom and all tutors in an area having qualified tutor status.
- In writing, no clear pattern of factors associated with progress emerged.
- Interviews with co-ordinators in seven areas where students made statistically significant progress revealed little that was unexpected, except perhaps a tendency towards more detailed attention to staff induction and development.
- A number of findings suggested a need for greater professionalisation of the adult basic skills teaching force.

Chapter 7

Summary and recommendations

7.1 Background, aims and method

- This study began before, but was completed after, the appearance of the Moser Report.
- The Basic Skills Agency commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to investigate the progress in literacy made by adults in dedicated mainstream basic skills provision in England and Wales, and factors associated with that progress.
- The study began in early 1998, and lasted two years.
- A set of reading tests was compiled from items used in previous studies. The items were chosen, and the tests designed, to provide three forms of national data: norm-referenced results against a national distribution, criterion-referenced results against a set of basic skills standards, and comparisons with school-level performance.
- Two main reading test forms were devised. Half the sample (randomly assigned) took each form at pre-test, and the other form at post-test. A complex and innovative statistical process was used to equate the test forms. The tests made literacy demands which could be considered largely functional; that is, they simulated tasks likely to be faced in everyday life.
- One-sentence writing prompts were also used at pre- and post-test.
- A total of 2,135 students (representing provision in 71 Colleges of Further Education and Local Education Authorities) took the reading pre-test, and 1,224 also the reading post-test (57 per cent retention). Writing scripts were received from 1,724 students at pre-test, and 937 at post-test (54 per cent retention). Detailed comparisons showed that those who returned at post-test were fully representative of the whole pre-test sample test, in terms of the characteristics on which information was available.
- Most of the students who took part in the study were in 'normal', ongoing basic skills provision. However, a small number of experimental and highly intensive courses were mounted in March 1999, and 206 students who attended those courses were studied both in their own right and as part of the full sample.

- Background data were gathered on students, and 177 adult literacy tutors responded to a questionnaire.
- Qualitative information was derived from interviews with seven basic skills co-ordinators and from fieldworkers' serendipitous impressions – there was no opportunity to carry out systematic observations of teaching.

7.2 Previous studies

- There has been only one previous quantitative national study of progress in adult literacy in Britain. That study was conducted over 20 years ago, its samples were small, and the statistical model used has since been found wanting. If reliable, the results suggest that reasonable progress was made in the forms of adult literacy provision then in use.
- None of the national progress studies of adult literacy in the USA provided reliable data, while a recent re-analysis of data from a large national one-off survey in the USA found no evidence of benefit to literacy attainment of participation in adult basic skills provision.
- *It therefore appears that the study reported in this volume is the first in the English-speaking world to provide reliable evidence of progress in adult literacy based on an adequately representative national sample.*

7.3 Adult literacy teachers and teaching

- Adult basic skills is a largely part-time and very largely female profession. Tutors are predominantly qualified in Arts subjects and mostly teach small groups a few hours per week.
- Adult literacy tutors seemed to keep largely up to date in terms of attending courses and reading books relevant to students' needs, but the writers on literacy who were most familiar to them had produced their most influential work some time ago.
- Overall, professional development and management support for tutors appeared patchy, and this was consistent with one of the findings of the Moser Report.
- It seemed that appropriate use was being made of classroom assistants, where they were available. No explanation was available of why nearly two fifths of tutors had no assistance.

- Tutors rated the ethos of their teaching as somewhat more important than attention to the practical skills of reading and writing, but the published materials they used, and those they devised themselves, did seem to address those skills directly.
- The overall impression of teaching was one of flexibility and individual initiative. This could be seen either as professionalism or as 'winging it'.

7.4 The students

The sample of students in this study:

- contained significantly more women than men (in the full sample, but among the intensive students there were slightly more men than women);
- represented a range of ages and occupational statuses;
- contained minorities of people for whom English was an additional language, and of ethnicities other than white;
- were mostly poorly qualified;
- had mostly attended basic skills provision before (in the full sample; among the intensive students just over half were new to adult literacy provision), and a minority were attending more than one form of provision in 1998/99;
- mostly received more than 30 hours of tuition between pre- and post-test;
- had reading levels quite similar, on average, to a national sample of 9-year-olds;
- were judged by their tutors to range from very weak to about the national average, with a majority already above Entry level.

7.5 The findings on students' progress

- Finer statistical discrimination at the lower end of the reading assessment scale was achieved. However, there were still too few reading items which the very weakest students could manage.
- *Both the full sample and the intensive students achieved a small but statistically significant improvement in reading.*
- In reading, just over half the full sample were already reading at a functional level at pre-test, and a few students were already above the national average. However, 48 per cent of the full sample had less than functional literacy at pre-test, and within these 29 per cent had very low pre-test scores. Even so, these findings suggest that an even smaller proportion of adults in greatest need of help with literacy are being reached than previously thought.

- The 'turbulence' seen in the results is an inherent aspect of all cognitive testing, but suggests that some students were not securely above the threshold of functional level.
- In the reading tests, students within Entry Levels 1 and 2 of the new Basic Skills Standards (29 per cent of the full sample) could not generally manage any of the test items.
- Students within Entry Level 3 of the new Basic Skills Standards could generally manage only a few very simple information-retrieval items.
- Students within Level 1 of the new Basic Skills Standards could generally manage all the information-retrieval reading items, but none requiring higher-order skills.
- Students within Level 2 of the new Basic Skills Standards could generally manage all the information-retrieval reading items and most of those requiring higher-order skills.
- Many students seemed to have developed coping strategies for reading non-continuous 'official'-type texts, but could cope less well with continuous texts such as newspaper articles. They may not be representative of adults in the lower half of the national distribution in this respect.
- *Both the full sample and the intensive students achieved a very small but statistically significant improvement in writing in terms of length of script, and the full sample also in quality of handwriting. However, these were the only statistically significant findings for writing; no significant improvements were found in terms of reduction of errors or increase in complexity.*
- Many students in the sample seemed to have distinctly poorer writing than reading skills. This phenomenon needs to be investigated further, along with its implications for teaching.
- Several of these findings lead to the conclusion that many students' literacy attainments are uneven, between reading and writing, between types of reading material, and from one occasion to another.
- Some students seemed to attend as much to maintain their skills as to improve them.
- *The main finding was that students made average gains in both reading and writing that were undramatic but worthwhile.*

7.6 Factors associated with progress

- Very few factors associated with differential progress were discovered.
- For reading, attendance at 51-60 hours of tuition had the strongest association with progress. Since regular attendance over several months would have been needed for students to attend this number of hours of tuition between pre- and post-test, the data suggested that *very regular attendance was associated with greater progress*.
- Since the students on intensive courses attended regularly, this suggests that intensive courses could be particularly effective.
- For reading, the only other factors found to have a positive relationship with students' gains were tutors having assistance in the classroom and all tutors in an area having qualified tutor status.
- In writing, no clear pattern of factors associated with progress emerged.
- Interviews with co-ordinators in seven areas where students made statistically significant progress revealed little that was unexpected, except perhaps a tendency towards more detailed attention to staff induction and development.
- A number of findings suggested a need for greater professionalisation of the adult basic skills teaching force.

7.7 Recommendations

- *All new students should be encouraged to attend very regularly, perhaps on an intensive course provision.* Intensive provision should perhaps also be offered to existing students who want to try getting a quick boost to their skills.
- Many students will have the further goal of not losing the skills they have gained, and *these students will need both maintenance of their skills and support for their literacy dealings with the world.* They will continue to need non-intensive provision.
- In-service professional development for tutors should embed attention to subject knowledge of the practicalities of literacy (teaching spelling, phonemic awareness and a range of cueing systems, comprehension, etc.) in a broader context of up-to-date theory, and aspects of pedagogy specific to literacy should receive more emphasis than general principles of teaching. Access to in-service provision should be eased for the large majority of the profession who are part-time.

- Improved professionalisation of adult literacy tutors should be designed to lead to more direct teaching of the specifics of literacy.
- There is a need for a planned series of micro-studies, of which four are suggested below.
- Methods of making classroom assistance more widely available should be examined, and the best ways to deploy tutors' classroom assistants should be investigated.
- Instruments for assessing students' progress need to be able to detect very small steps of progress at the lowest levels.
- The conditions in which students' learning is best consolidated and maintained need to be understood much better.
- Reasons for the apparent discrepancy between reading and writing attainment should be investigated, along with its implications for teaching.

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Appendix A

How the study was carried out – full description

A.1 Coverage

The BSA's statistical report for 1996/97 (Basic Skills Agency, 1999, Table 4, p.3) gave the total number of students in basic skills provision in England and Wales in the academic year 1996/97 (the academic year two years before that in which this study was conducted, but the most recent for which statistics were available) as 362,449. The same report (Table 6, pp.5-6) gave the numbers of students attending FE College or LEA provision in literacy alone or literacy and numeracy combined: see Table A.1.

Table A.1: **Numbers of students attending literacy and literacy and numeracy provision in England and Wales in 1996/97, by sector**

	Literacy only	*Literacy & numeracy*	*Total*
England			
FE Colleges	66,232	47,048	113,280
LEAs	29,553	11,400	40,953
Total	95,785	58,448	154,233
Wales			
FE Colleges	3,491	4,710	8,201
LEAs	1,632	1,545	3,177
Total	5,123	6,255	11,378
Grand total	**100,908**	**64,703**	**165,611**
Total FE			121,481
Total LEA			44,130

However, the figures in Table A.1 were for all forms of provision, and this study was intended to cover only dedicated provision in the BSA's sense. The Basic Skills Agency report (Table 8, p.7) also gave the percentages of students in dedicated provision as 56.1 per cent in England and 40.8 per cent in Wales; applying these to the figures of 154,233

and 11,378 respectively gives 86,524 + 4,642 = 91,166 as an estimate of the number of students in dedicated adult literacy provision (with or without numeracy) in England and Wales in 1996/97. Assuming the same rate of increase in both academic years between 1996/97 and 1998/99 as between 1995/96 and 1996/97 (10.2 per cent: Basic Skills Agency, 1999, Table 5, p. 3), there would have been about 110,700 students in the relevant forms of provision in 1998/99. The 2,135 students who took the reading pre-test in this study would represent nearly 2 per cent of that figure.

A.2 Instruments for assessing students' progress

A.2.1 Reading

Very early in the study it became clear that no instrument capable of meeting the Agency's statistical requirements existed. The timescale of the study did not permit the creation of a new instrument, however. Therefore a search was made for instruments from which suitable items could be drawn. The process by which a set of reading tests was devised is described in Appendix B.

Because the reading tests relied on an AB/BA design it was decided that they would be administered on a secure basis at both pre- and post-test by fieldworkers recruited and trained by NFER. Eventually, about 50 people were trained and worked as reading test administrators.

A.2.2 Writing

Two simple, one-sentence prompts were devised, one each for pre- and post-test:

(Pre-test)	**Please write a bit about what you hope to learn here.**
(Post-test)	**Please write a bit about what you have learnt here.**

These were printed on sheets which had spaces for the student's name, ID number and college or centre. The reading test administrators left these with the students' tutors to be completed as soon as possible after the administrator's visit and returned to NFER.

A.3 Background instruments

A.3.1 Student Profile

This instrument was designed to gather background information on the students, and is reproduced in Appendix C. The reading test administrators left the Profiles also with the students' tutors, at pre-test only, to be completed as soon as possible after the administrator's visit and returned to NFER.

A0100

A. 3.2 Hours of tuition form

One obvious variable that is often found to be related to educational progress is time, the amount of relevant teaching students receive between pre- and post-test. A form was devised on which test administrators were asked to fill in, before each post-test visit, the names and IDs of the students who had been pre-tested at that centre; the administrators left the form with the tutor for completion (filling in each post-tested student's number of hours of attendance between pre- and post-test) and return. Where students were attending combined literacy and numeracy provision, tutors were requested to fill in only the number of hours of literacy provision attended.

A. 3. 3 Tutor questionnaire

A questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix D) was devised for completion by tutors covering their background, current basic skills teaching in general, current adult literacy teaching in particular, assistance with teaching, management and support, teaching and assessment, and professional development.

This instrument went through many drafts and was ready in May 1999. Where post-testing was still in progress, the questionnaire was given to tutors by the test administrators; otherwise it was posted.

A.4 Qualitative data

The project team was not asked to carry out any systematic observation of adult literacy teaching, and there was no opportunity to do so. However, all the test administrators observed a good deal informally while on fieldwork, and a few were asked to put their impressions in writing. While in no way representative, these accounts provided some qualitative background and insights for this report – see, for instance, section A.7 below.

Once all the data were analysed for the full sample, they were further analysed at provider level, in order to investigate whether students in some areas achieved noticeably better progress than in others. Statistically significant progress had been made by students in seven areas, and the adult basic skills co-ordinator in each of these was contacted and interviewed – but was not told the basis of selection. Again, these interviews were not representative but yielded valuable insights – see section 6.5.

A.5 Test scoring and data analysis

In order to ensure consistency, test scoring was carried out centrally, under NFER's direction. The scoring of the reading tasks was done by temporary workers trained for the purpose and using explicit and comprehensive marking keys. The analysis of the reading data was a very intricate process, and is described in Appendix E.

The writing scripts were scored by a small team of markers trained for the purpose and using a specially devised marking scheme. An outline of the scheme is given in Appendix F.

Data on students' background, on hours of tuition, and from the tutor questionnaire were first analysed raw, that is, simply in terms of the frequency of responses in various subcategories. Then students' gains in reading and writing were related to each of the categories on the Student Profiles and to the number of hours of tuition received between pre- and post-test, and gains in reading to selected items from the tutor questionnaire.

A.6 Sampling

The project statistician advised that a pre-test sample of 1,000 students on each of the two main reading test forms (see Appendix B) would be both sufficiently representative of the target population and statistically adequate. Statistical adequacy meant that a sample of that size would both enable the two test forms to be equated (since students were assigned randomly at pre-test to forms A and B) and support the attribution of IALS scaled values to the non-IALS items. It was therefore decided to aim for a pre-test sample of somewhat over 2,000 and for a post-test sample of at least 1,200. The 'somewhat over' in the pre-test sample was a safety margin in case of higher than expected drop-out – the known drop-out rate from adult basic skills provision was about 50 per cent (Kambouri and Francis, 1994).

In order to locate the sample of students, the Agency allowed the NFER to use its database of providers. Every year the Agency conducts a statistical questionnaire survey of basic skills provision in England and Wales, and publishes the results as a supplement to its annual report. In early 1998, the database contained contact details for about 1,100 providers, and the number of students served by each in the academic year 1995/96 (the returns for 1996/97 were still being processed). From this list all providers other than FE Colleges and LEAs were dropped; also all those with student numbers below 100 – this was because reaching such small numbers, often in rural areas, would have been impractical. This left a pool of about 500 providers. From these about 100 were sampled to represent the FE and LEA sectors in Wales and the regions of England. Just under 30 declined, or had insufficient or no provision in 1998/99, so that the final numbers of providers participating in the study were as shown in Table A.2.

Table A.2: **Numbers of providers participating, by sector and country**

	England	Wales	Total
Colleges of Further Education	36	13	49
Local Education Authorities	15	7	22
Total	**51**	**20**	**71**

The numbers given are for the progress study and the intensive courses combined. The 2.2:1 ratio of FE to LEA slightly over-represented the LEA sector – the ratio of student numbers shown in Table A.1 was 2.75:1. There were nine providers of intensive courses: all but two of these also contributed 'normal' provision to the progress study.

A.7 Period of testing

Pre-testing began in October 1998. Because of the need to recruit at least 2,000 students into the sample, pre-testing continued until May 1999. Meanwhile, post-testing began in March 1999 (because some provision ended at Easter), and continued until July.

The length of time taken to gather the test data had several causes. Where centres operated drop-in or open learning provision fieldworkers could (in theory) use the whole day for testing. More often, however, large centres operated three sessions a day (morning, afternoon, evening); small centres, especially in rural areas, sometimes provided just one or a very few sessions per week. Virtually no provision occurred on Fridays, and less in the afternoons than during the morning and evening. The reading tests took on average over 20 minutes per student to administer. The number of students present when test administrators visited was often fewer than eight: some students declined to take the test; and it was only sometimes possible to test all the students present. So, even working six hours (all three sessions) a tester could not possibly test more than about 20 students per day; and in fact the average per day was nearer ten. Add to that the distances to be travelled, and clashes between times when groups of students were available, and a good total for a week for one administrator was 30 students tested.

A.8 Amounts of data collected

The final numbers of students for whom reading, writing, background and hours of tuition data were gathered are shown in Table A.3.

Table A.3: **Numbers of students on whom data were gathered**

		Pre-test	*Post-test*	*Retention rate*
Reading	Progress study	1925	1026	53%
	Intensive courses	210	198	94%
	Total	**2135**	**1224**	**57%**
Writing	Progress study	1537	786	51%
	Intensives	187	151	81%
	Total	**1724**	**937**	**54%**
Student Profiles	Progress study	1709	n/a	
	Intensives	206	n/a	
	Total	**1915**	**n/a**	
Hours of tuition	Progress study	n/a	819	
	Intensives	n/a	163	
	Total	**n/a**	**982**	

In many cases the numbers given in results tables differ slightly from those just given: this is due to missing data.

In addition, 177 tutor questionnaires were returned, seven ABS co-ordinators were interviewed, and several test administrators wrote up the impressions they had gained during fieldwork.

A.9 Representativeness of post-test samples

The proportions of intensive students who returned at post-test were so high that there could be no doubt that the returners were representative of those who had taken the pre-test. However, retention rates were much lower for the full sample. Because of this, it was essential to check the representativeness of those who did return. This was done by comparing the returners for the reading tests with the full pre-test sample for those tests in two ways: according to the distribution of their scaled scores, and according to their background characteristics. These comparisons are shown in Tables A.4-5.

Table A.4: **Comparison of reading test returners with whole pre-test sample by distribution of pre-test scores within IALS levels**

		Whole pre-test sample		*Returners only*	
IALS scaled score band	*IALS levels*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
376+	5	0	0	0	0
326-375	4	34	2	14	1
276-325	3	559	26	302	25
226-275	2	561	26	320	26
<226	1	977	46	584	48
Total		**2131**	**100**	**1220**	**100**

Table A.5: **Comparison of reading test returners with whole pre-test sample by background characteristics**

		Whole pre-test sample		*Returners only*	
		N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Total		**1915**	**100**	**1134**	**100**
Sex	Men	819	45	498	45
	Women	1023	56	606	55
	Total	**1842**	**100**	**1104**	**100**
	no information	73		30	
Age	70+	17	1	16	2
	65-69	31	2	25	2
	60-64	51	3	35	3
	55-59	74	4	42	4
	50-54	107	6	72	7
	45-49	153	9	96	9
	40-44	183	11	97	10
	35-39	244	15	151	15
	30-34	239	14	147	14

		Whole pre-test sample		*Returners only*	
		N	%	*N*	%
Age	25-29	169	10	87	9
	20-24	156	9	76	8
	under 20	248	15	153	15
	Total	**1672**	**100**	**1016**	**100**
	no information	243		118	
Ethnicity	White	1556	84	963	87
	Black – Caribbean	82	4	50	5
	Black – African	22	1	8	1
	Black – Other	7	<1	1	<1
	Indian	28	2	8	1
	Pakistani	57	3	26	2
	Bangladeshi	14	1	7	1
	Chinese	17	1	10	1
	Other	79	4	40	4
	Total	**1862**	**100**	**1113**	**100**
	no information	53		21	
First language	English	1510	82	942	88
	Other	334	18	132	12
	Total	**1844**	**100**	**1074**	**100**
	no information	71		66	
Occupational status	F/t employed	265	15	141	13
	P/t employed	215	12	126	12
	F/t self-employed	16	1	7	1
	P/t self-employed	15	1	9	1

		Whole pre-test sample		*Returners only*	
		N	%	*N*	%
Occupational status	Unemployed	465	26	286	26
	F/t education	174	10	115	11
	Temp sick/disabled	52	3	30	3
	Perm sick/disabled	149	8	104	10
	Looking after home/family	288	16	165	15
	Other	163	9	106	10
	Total	**1802**	**100**	**1089**	**100**
	no information	113		45	
Highest qualification	None	940	50	537	48
	A Basic Skills cert	124	7	98	9
	CSE/GCSE	269	14	156	14
	O-Level	29	2	17	2
	FE	475	25	298	26
	A-Level	16	1	8	1
	Higher education	38	2	13	1
	Total	**1891**	**100**	**1125**	**100**
	no information	24		9	
Previous basic skills tuition	None	639	36	352	33
	In 1998 only	419	24	250	23
	In 1997 or earlier	709	40	468	44
	Total	**1767**	**100**	**1070**	**100**
	no information	148		64	

Comparisons between the full sample and the returners are not shown for languages other than English, forms of provision being attended in 1998/99 or modes of teaching being experienced in 1998/99 because many of the categories were too small to be reliable.

On almost all other background variables, and in terms of IALS levels at pre-test, the returners were an extremely close match for the full sample, and may safely be considered a fully representative subset.

The only slight exception was first language, where rather more non-native than native speakers of English seem to have dropped out between pre- and post-test. In fact, this is logical: many non-native speakers are in basic skills provision to bring their command of spoken English up to a level satisfactory to them, for their own purposes and in order to function in an English-speaking society. All will be fluent speakers of their mother tongue, and many will have good or even excellent literacy in that language; some will also be literate in English, but without spoken fluency. When they feel that their command of English has improved enough, some students in this category cease to attend.

Parallel analyses of the representativeness of students from whom writing scripts were received at both pre- and post-test yielded very similar results.

Appendix B

How the reading tests were devised

B.1 Reporting requirements

The BSA's reporting requirements for this study were that the reading tests should indicate how good the students' progress was in national terms. By 'in national terms' was meant that the tests should provide:

- **norm-referenced statistics to answer the question 'How good was the progress made by these students in relation to national adult norms for literacy?'**
- **some comparison with the performance of school pupils**
- **criterion-referenced statistics to answer the question 'What proportion of the students tested moved up at least one level on a relevant set of literacy Standards?'**

Also, design considerations meant that it would be insufficient to have just one test form (any improvement at post-test might be due solely to practice, to having seen the test before); two parallel or equatable forms would be necessary. These would then have to be used in an AB/BA or swop-over design: half the students, randomly assigned, would take form A at pre-test and form B at post-test, and the other half vice versa (if all students took one form at pre-test and the other at post-test, any improvement might be due solely to the second form being easier).

Adult basic skills co-ordinators representing about 30 providers were consulted about the project in a series of meetings at the Agency in 1998. These consultations were very helpful in preparing the ground for the fieldworkers' visits; they also produced a fifth requirement on the reading tests, namely that each of the parallel test forms should have two entry points, one simple and the other very simple, so that adult literacy tutors could indicate which level of test each of their students should attempt.

It was concluded very early in the project that no existing instrument could meet even one of these requirements, let alone all five. There was also insufficient time to develop new tests. It was therefore decided to devise a set of tests by borrowing items from existing instruments.

B.2 Norm-referenced items

There was only one existing reading test from which standardised (norm-referenced) results for the adult population of Britain had been derived. This was the test used in the *International Adult Literacy Study* (IALS), the British section of which was conducted in 1996 (Carey *et al.*, 1997), using a nationally representative sample of adults aged 16 to 65. This test was therefore norm-referenced to a relevant population.

However, because IALS tested adults from the whole range of ability the test contained items of a very wide range of difficulty. It also contained items of three types, testing Prose, Document and Quantitative Literacy (roughly, tasks based on continuous texts, tasks based on non-continuous texts such as timetables, and tasks based on text but requiring computation). Neither the more difficult items nor those testing quantitative literacy would have been fit for the purposes of this study, but a few Prose and Document items were suitable for the target group.

It was therefore decided to use 25 Prose and Document items (11 tasks) from the IALS test. These items already had values on the scale used in IALS. On the assumption that they would behave, statistically, in approximately the same way in this study as they had in IALS, it would be possible to use these items to 'anchor' the other items in this study to the IALS scale, that is, to calculate IALS values for the non-IALS items; and then use the scaled values for all the items to calculate standardised scores for each student.

Of the 25 Prose and Document IALS items used,

- **11 had been empirically determined within IALS as being within Level 1 of the IALS reporting scale – these were all the Level 1 items from IALS;**
- **10 were IALS Level 2 items; and**
- **four were IALS Level 3 items.**

The Level 2 and 3 items were all based on tasks which also had Level 1 items. The four Level 3 items were used because there needed to be a few items to stretch the more advanced students.

Though items were borrowed from the IALS test, they still left two problems: there were only enough of them to create one test form, not two, each with two entry points; and none of the IALS items was simple enough for people with very limited literacy. Both problems implied a need to 'create the lower rungs of the ladder', a set of very simple items which would not overface students with very low literacy but which would provide detailed statistical discrimination at the lower end of the scale.

This was done by borrowing very simple items, some from a school-level test, others from criterion-referenced sources.

B.3 Comparison with school-level performance

To meet the requirement to provide some comparison with school-level performance, three tasks (containing 12 items in all) were borrowed from the tests used with 9-year-olds (Population A) in the 1991 Reading Literacy Study (Elley, 1992) carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The UK did not take part in that study, but in 1996 NFER carried out a replication of the age 9 section in England and Wales (Brooks *et al.*, 1996). The three IEA tasks were included in the study to provide a minimal indication of how well English and Welsh adults performed compared to 9-year-olds in the same countries. One of these tasks was of the IALS Prose type, and another of the IALS Document type. The third was based on a short narrative text, and this was the only text of this genre used in this study: for statistical purposes it was included with the Prose tasks.

B.4 Criterion-referenced items

In 1992-93 NFER developed for the BSA a battery of literacy and numeracy tests intended to assess adults' attainment against the BSA's Communication and Numeracy Standards. These tests were used by the BSA as a research instrument: for instance, some of the literacy tasks were used in a study it commissioned of the competence in English of adults from linguistic minorities (*Lost Opportunities*, Carr-Hill *et al.*, 1996). That study also used some newly devised tasks, and some from other existing sources, and all the tasks used were validated against the BSA Communication Standards.

For the present study five tasks (16 items) from *Lost Opportunities* were used, including some originally developed by NFER, plus three tasks (12 items) from those developed by NFER but not used in *Lost Opportunities*. Thus there was in the tests a set of items which were intended to be criterion-referenced against the BSA Standards, of which the majority had been empirically validated against them.

All the *Lost Opportunities* and NFER items used were intended to address either Entry Level or Level 1 of the BSA Standards. Just as the IALS items were to be used to derive IALS scaled values for the non-IALS items, so the *Lost Opportunities* and NFER items were to be used to anchor other items to the BSA Communication Standards, so that all 70 items would be criterion-referenced.

B.5 Compiling the test forms

The process of item selection produced a set of 70 items (22 tasks) in all: 25 items (11 tasks) from IALS, 12 items (three tasks) from IEA, 28 items (eight tasks) from *Lost Opportunities* and/or the NFER test battery, and five items newly devised to fill out IALS tasks where relatively long texts had too few questions. The items were assembled into two test forms, each with two opening sections and a common main section. IALS items, being more difficult than the rest, were used only in the common sections, together with new items based on the same texts. IEA, *Lost Opportunities* and NFER items were used in the opening sections. Each opening section had 10 items, the common section of Form A 16 items, and the common section of Form B 14 items. Thus each student was faced on each test occasion with only 26 or 24 items.

The structure of the tests is shown in Figure B.1.

Figure B.1: **Structure of the reading tests**

	Form A		Form B	
	Form AL	Form AH	Form BL	Form BH
Opening section	10 very simple items	10 simple items	10 very simple items	10 simple items
	↘	↙	↘	↙
Main section	16 IALS items		14 IALS items	

There were 11 Prose tasks (including the one narrative) yielding 37 items; and 11 Document tasks yielding 33 items. These were approximately evenly distributed between the test forms. The tasks made reading (and to an extent, see the next section, writing) demands which could be considered largely functional: that is, they simulated public or other real-world literacy demands likely to be faced in everyday life. (For more detail on the tasks, see section 5.4.)

B.6 Methods of task administration

All the reading tasks were administered in a way which was as close as possible to the original method, that is, the way in which they had been administered in previous studies. In all cases the student was required to read the stimulus unaided, but in all cases the tester told the student what the task was, even though this was also stated on the stimulus sheet.

Differences between tasks concerned the modes of response:

- **There were a few items where students had only to circle the response (for example, two dates on a calendar);**
- **There were several items where the tester read the questions to the student and then wrote the student's answers down verbatim;**
- **The 12 IEA items were all multiple-choice: students ticked one of four boxes to indicate the response. Here students had to read not only the stimulus text but also the questions and the four choices of answer to each question, but still did not have to write the answer;**
- **All the previous item types occurred in the opening sections of the tests. For the items based on IALS tasks (which all occurred in the main sections of the tests), the student was required not only to read the stimulus unaided but also to write the response unaided.**

Thus in the opening sections of the four test versions, the response modes varied from the very simple (circling) to a mode somewhat simpler than having to write the response unaided, namely multiple-choice. In no case in the opening sections did the student have to write an answer. Where the answer did have to be written down in the opening sections, the tester did this (in addition to reading the question to the student). There was least support for the students' literacy in the main sections of the tests.

Appendix C

Student Profile

NFER ADULT LITERACY STUDY 1998-99

Student Profile

		NFER Use
Identifier		6-10
Student's Surname (IN CAPS)		11-30
Student's Given Name(s) (IN CAPS)		31-50
Gender: *Please circle:* Male / Female		51
Date of Birth: ___ / ___ / ___		52-57
Time in UK: ___ years		58-59

Ethnic Group (CIRCLE ONE):

White	1	
Black – Caribbean	2	
Black – African	3	
Black – other	4	
Indian	5	60
Pakistani	6	
Bangladeshi	7	
Chinese	8	
Other (please specify)	9	

Occupational Status (CIRCLE ONE):

Full-time paid employee	1	
Part-time paid employee	2	
Full-time self employed	3	
Part-time self employed	4	
Unemployed	5	61
Full-time education	6	
Temporarily sick/disabled	7	
Permanently sick/disabled	8	
Looking after home/family	9	
Other (please specify)	0	

	NFER Use
Language: Is English the only language the student speaks?	
Please circle YES / NO	62
If NO, please state the other language(s) the student speaks:	63-64
.....	65-66
Education	
Highest qualification awarded:	67
Had the student received any basic skills tuition before Autumn term 1998? *Please circle* YES / NO	68
Had the student received any basic skills tuition before Autumn term 1997? *Please circle* YES / NO	69
Which of the following types of provision is the student receiving in the Autumn term 1998? *Please tick all that apply*	
Primary literacy/numeracy ☐	70
Adult Training (Training for Work) ☐	71
Training via Youth Credits ☐	72
Literacy/numeracy support ☐	73
Workplace training ☐	74
Family literacy ☐	75
Open learning ☐	76
Drop-in ☐	77
Group tuition ☐	78
One-to-one provision in College/Centre with tutor ☐	79
One-to-one provision in College/Centre with tutor PLUS volunteer support ☐	80
Other (please specify) ☐	81

Appendix D

Tutor Questionnaire

NFER Adult Literacy Progress Study 1998-99

ID: .....

TUTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

CONFIDENTIAL

Your name: .....

LEA/FE College: ..... Centre: .....

Thank you very much for helping us with our research.

This questionnaire seeks information about:

1. You
2. Your current basic skills teaching in general
3. Your current adult literacy teaching in particular
4. Assistance with teaching
5. Management and support
6. Planning
7. Teaching and assessment
8. Professional development

Please return to:

Greg Brooks
National Foundation for Educational Research
The Mere, Upton Park
Slough SL1 2DQ

01753 574123

by 30 June 1999 at the latest

BSL

© National Foundation for Educational Research 1999

About you

1.1 Please circle one

Male / Female
1 2

1.2 What kinds of formal education have you completed?
Please tick a box for each level of formal education you have completed:

- Master's degree or Doctorate ☐
- Bachelor's degree which includes Education ☐
- Bachelor's degree ☐
- City & Guilds Certificate 9282 ☐
- City & Guilds Certificate 9283 ☐
- City & Guilds Certificate 9284 ☐
- City & Guilds Certificate 9285 ☐
- A Post experience diploma in adult literacy/basic skills ☐
- A Post experience diploma in any other subject ☐
- PGCE ☐
- Teacher's Certificate ☐

1.3 *If you tick any of the first three options, please state the main subject(s) studied here:*

Master's degree or Doctorate _____

Bachelor's degrees which includes Education _____

Bachelor's degree _____

1.4 By the end of this academic year, how many years of teaching experience will you have had? *Please round to the nearest whole number*

	Total	In adult literacy
No. of years full-time (i.e. over 35 hours a week)	☐	☐
No. of years part-time	☐	☐

About your current basic skills teaching in general

2.1 Do you now teach basic skills full-time (i.e. over 35 hours a week) or part-time?

(Please tick one)

Full-time ☐

Part-time ☐

2.2 Whether you teach full-time or part-time, please indicate the total number of hours per week that you teach basic skills (that is, contact hours with students, including resource-based learning):

(Round to the nearest whole number) ☐ contact hours per week

2.3 Within that total, how many hours do you teach adult literacy?

(Round to the nearest whole number) ☐ contact hours per week

2.4 What is the average size of adult literacy group (that is, number of students *present*) that you teach? *(If you teach in 'drop-in' provision, please give the average number of students* ***present*** *per session.)*

☐ students

About your current adult literacy teaching in particular

Please answer questions 3.1 to 4.5 with reference to the adult literacy provision on which you teach and which was visited by an NFER fieldworker.

3.1 How many hours per week do you teach this group? ☐ hours per week

3.2 How many students regularly attend this group? ☐ students

3.3 Please indicate how many of those students are at each of the following levels of the Basic Skills Agency's Communication Standards (please ensure that the total equals the number in the answer to question 3.2):

Level 3 ☐

Level 2 ☐

Level 1 ☐

Entry level ☐

below Entry level ☐

3.4 We'd like to know which of the following goals each of these students is working towards. Using a register or other list of the students in this group, please fill in one line for each student and tick as many columns as apply for each student. *(For example, if the first student on your list is working only towards self-determined goals, tick only that column in the first line):*

Student no.	Portfolio-based accreditation	Test/exams-based accreditation	Self-determined goals	None of these
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

3.5 Do any of the students in this group, to your knowledge, have other adult literacy teaching during the course of the week?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If NO, please go to question 3.8.

If YES, please go to question 3.6.

3.6 How many of the students in this group have other adult literacy teaching during the course of the week?

☐ students

3.7 How is record-keeping co-ordinated between you, the students and the students' other tutors?

(Please tick all that apply)

Records are kept centrally ☐

Each student keeps own records ☐

You keep records ☐

The other tutors keep records ☐

3.8 How often do your students have access to computers and other IT equipment?

(Please tick one)

Every session ☐ 1

Some sessions ☐ 2

Never ☐ 3

3.9 Do you ever use any textbook(s) or commercially-produced materials in teaching adult literacy to this group?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If NO, please go to question 3.11.

If YES, please list those you use most frequently:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

3.10 Approximately what percentage of your literacy teaching time with this group is based on the materials indicated in the previous question?

(Please tick one box)

0-25% ☐ 1 26-50% ☐ 2 51-75% ☐ 3 76-100% ☐ 4

3.11 Do you ever use any materials you devise yourself in teaching adult literacy to this group?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If NO, please go to question 4.1.

If YES, please list those you devise most frequently:

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.12 Approximately what percentage of your literacy teaching time with this group is based on materials you devise yourself?

(Please tick one box)

0-25% ☐ 26-50% ☐ 51-75% ☐ 76-100% ☐

Assistance with teaching

4.1 Do you regularly have volunteers and/or paid assistants working with you in this group?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If NO, please go to question 5.1.

If YES,please go to question 4.2

4.2 On average, in each session, how many volunteers or paid assistants do you have working with you in this group?

☐ volunteers

☐ paid assistants

4.3 Which aspects of the work do they help you with?

(Please tick all that apply in both columns)

	volunteers	paid assistants
Planning		
Support for individual students		
Support for whole group		
Support for more basic students		
Other *(please specify)*		

4.4 How do you as the tutor organise this?

4.5 On average over a term, how often do volunteers and/or paid assistants attend classes with this group? *(Please tick one box)*

- Almost every session ☐ 1
- About ¾ of the sessions ☐ 2
- About ½ the sessions ☐ 3
- About ¼ of the sessions ☐ 4
- Less than ¼ of the sessions ☐ 5

From here to the end of the questionnaire please answer in general terms (and not with specific reference to your current group).

Management and support

5.1 What form does support from your basic skills line manager(s) take? *(Please tick all that apply)*

- No support provided ☐
- Drop-in provision for tutors ☐
- Visits to your class ☐
- Enabling you to observe other tutors ☐
- Out of hours support ☐
- Other *(please specify)* ..... ☐

5.2 About how often do you have **formal** meetings with other tutors to discuss and/or plan the curriculum/teaching approaches? *(Please tick one)*

- Never ☐ 1
- once a term ☐ 2
- twice a term ☐ 3
- more than twice a term but not weekly ☐ 4
- every week ☐ 5

5.3 About how often do you have **informal** meetings with other tutors to discuss and/or plan the curriculum/teaching approaches? *(Please tick one)*

- Never ☐ 1
- once a term ☐ 2
- twice a term ☐ 3
- more than twice a term but not weekly ☐ 4
- every week ☐ 5

Planning

6.1 In planning your adult literacy teaching, do you follow a defined curriculum?

YES ☐
NO ☐

If NO, please go to question 6.3.
If YES,please go to question 6.2

6.2 Is the curriculum you follow *(Please tick all that apply)*

- devised by you? ☐
- based on an accreditation framework? ☐
- devised by your Programme Manager? ☐
- other? *(Please specify)* ..... ☐

6.3 In planning your adult literacy teaching, do you follow a scheme of work?

YES ☐
NO ☐

If NO, please go to question 6.5.
If YES,please go to question 6.4

6.4 Is the scheme of work you follow *(Please tick all that apply)*

- devised by you? ☐
- based on an accreditation framework? ☐
- devised by your Programme Manager? ☐
- other? *(Please specify)* ..... ☐

6.5 When planning adult literacy provision, how much do you rely on . . .

Please circle one number in each row

	not at all	a little	a great deal
(a) your own previously prepared classes?	1	2	3
(b) students' individual learning plans?	1	2	3
(c) other tutors or ABS specialists in your LEA/College?	1	2	3
(d) students' edition of textbooks?	1	2	3
(e) other textbooks or resource books?	1	2	3
(f) tutors' guides or tutor edition of textbook?	1	2	3
(g) external assessments?	1	2	3
(h) feedback from your observations and assessments of students' work?	1	2	3

Teaching and assessment

7.1 In your adult literacy teaching, how often do you include the following in your scheme of work?

Please circle one number in each row

	never or almost never	some lessons	most lessons	every lesson
(a) reading aloud	1	2	3	4
(b) work on phonics, including phonemic awareness	1	2	3	4
(c) work on spelling	1	2	3	4
(d) work on punctuation	1	2	3	4
(e) work on handwriting skills	1	2	3	4
(f) cloze exercises	1	2	3	4
(g) matching exercises	1	2	3	4
(h) work to develop a sight vocabulary	1	2	3	4
(i) work to develop reading strategies	1	2	3	4
(j) work to develop spelling strategies	1	2	3	4
(k) work on grammar/syntax	1	2	3	4
(l) work on whole language/language experience	1	2	3	4
(m) reading a passage and answering questions on it	1	2	3	4
(n) explaining the reasoning behind an answer	1	2	3	4
(o) students writing for their own purposes	1	2	3	4

7.2 For approximately what proportion of the time in your adult literacy classes do you teach your students?

Please circle one number in each row

	never	about ¼ time	about ½ time	about ¾ time	all the time
(a) individually?	1	2	3	4	5
(b) as a class?	1	2	3	4	5
(c) in mixed-ability sets or small groups?	1	2	3	4	5
(d) in sets or small groups *selected by ability?*	1	2	3	4	5

7.3 This is a double question about assessing the progress of your adult literacy students. For each of the forms of evidence listed below please

(1) circle one of the first three numbers to indicate how much weight you give it in *planning* your students' progress;

(2) circle one of the second three numbers to indicate how much weight you give it in *assessing* your students' progression in learning:

	Please circle one number in each row **Planning**			*Please circle one number in each row* **Assessing**		
	none	some	a great deal	none	some	a great deal
(a) Student self-assessment negotiated with you	1	2	3	1	2	3
(b) Students' portfolios	1	2	3	1	2	3
(c) Continuous assessment	1	2	3	1	2	3
(d) How well students do on written assignments	1	2	3	1	2	3
(e) How well students do in oral work	1	2	3	1	2	3
(f) Listening to students read aloud	1	2	3	1	2	3
(g) Tutor-made tests	1	2	3	1	2	3
(h) Published tests	1	2	3	1	2	3

7.4 To make progress in literacy, how important do you think it is for students to:

Please circle one number in each row

	not important	somewhat important	very important
(a) remember spellings?	1	2	3
(b) write in an organised way?	1	2	3
(c) understand concepts about print?	1	2	3
(d) understand how literacy is used in the real world?	1	2	3
(e) have ownership of their own learning?	1	2	3
(f) work on topics which are relevant to them?	1	2	3
(g) regularly achieve short term goals?	1	2	3
(h) be given support, evaluation and tutorials?	1	2	3
(i) carry out home study?	1	2	3
(j) read regularly?	1	2	3
(k) develop phonological awareness?	1	2	3
(l) develop self-confidence?	1	2	3
(m) find their teaching group safe, socially?	1	2	3

Professional development

8.1 Please name the book on the teaching of literacy you read most recently:

_____

8.2 When did you read it? (month and year) ☐☐

8.3 Have you attended any professional development (in-service) activities (such as courses, conferences, seminars) since September 1996?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If NO, please go to question 8.5.

If YES,please go to question 8.4

8.4 Which areas did the professional development activity/ies cover?

(Please tick all that apply.)

- teaching of reading ☐
- teaching of writing ☐
- recent research in literacy ☐
- phonological awareness ☐
- IT and literacy ☐
- Other *(please specify)* _____ ☐

8.5 For each of the following authors, please tick to show whether or not you are familiar with his/her work on literacy:

	Familiar	*Some Knowledge*	*Not familiar*
D. Barton			
R. Beard			
N. Bielby			
L. Bradley			
P. Bryant			
H. Dombey			
K. Goodman			
U. Goswami			
M. Hamilton			
S. Lloyd			
M. Meek Spencer			
F. Smith			
M. Snowling			
L. Waterland			

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Please return it to Greg Brooks at NFER (see front page) **by 30 June 1999 at the latest.**

Appendix E

How the reading data were analysed

E.1 Norm-referenced data

Two series of tests were used, labelled A and B. At the pre-test, testers were instructed to give out the A and B series alternately. Depending on their tutors' assessment of their ability, the more advanced students were given the 'H' test (AH or BH), and those whom it was felt might have difficulty with these were given the 'L' test (AL or BL). At the post-test, respondents were given the corresponding version in the other series. Thus for example those who had AH first time round were given BH at the post-test, and those who had taken BL were given AL at post-test.

Within each test, items were labelled as either 'P' (Prose) or 'D' (Document). The basic plan was to calibrate the items using a two-parameter logistic model (Lord, 1980):

$$P[x_{ij} = 1 \mid \theta_j, a_i, b_i) = \frac{1}{1 + \exp[-Da_i(\theta_j - b_i)]}$$

Then the items were equated to the parameters reported for IALS using a linear transformation. Numbers of items available for equating in each test were as shown in Table E.1. The same IALS equating items appeared in both the 'H' and 'L' forms of each test.

Table E.1: **Number of items available for equating with IALS**

Item Type	*Form A*	*Form B*	*Total*
Prose	6	3	9
Document	7	9	16
Total	**13**	**12**	**25**

Because of the sampling design, the populations that took the 'A' and 'B' tests were randomly equivalent, and so it was possible to calibrate the 'A' and 'B' items jointly. This meant that there were 9 IALS Prose items available for equating, and 16 IALS

Document items. These numbers, especially that for Prose items, are rather low compared with the recommended number of 20.

Tables E.2-5 show the item statistics for fitting the 'P' and 'D' items in the 'A' and 'B' subtests, respectively. In none of the tables is the fit particularly good. In Table E.2, 14 of the 20 items do not fit at the 0.05 level overall, 4 out of 6 in the IALS items, and 6 out of 14 in the rest. In Table E.3 11 of the 16 items do not fit, including no less than 6 of the 7 from IALS, and 5 out of 9 of the rest. In Table E.4, none of the IALS items fit, while all of the rest do. Table E.5 is the most successful, with only 4 of the 26 items showing lack of fit at the 0.05 level.

What does this mean? It is important to emphasise that lack of item fit does not in itself mean that items are 'bad items', simply that they do not fit with the rest. Moreover, the IALS items were not specifically designed for the type of population sampled in this study, being viewed as the lower end of a general continuum, but as part of an overall scale, while the remainder were designed specifically for those undertaking some kind of adult literacy learning.

In tables E.2, E.3 and E.5, the biserial coefficients and the slopes are higher for the IALS items than for the newer ones. High biserials are generally considered to be an important feature of a successful item. The higher slopes could indicate either that the IALS items form a more coherent scale than the rest (the 'new' items), or that the new items relate particularly strongly to what is taught in literacy classes, so that there is less differentiation among students. In either case, it seems that the IALS and the new items behave rather differently.

Table E.4 differs from the other three. It appears that all the new items fit, and none of the IALS ones. However the new ones are essentially too easy for the population, with all having facilities of over 0.9. It seems likely that this arises because this is one of the most emphasised aspects of literacy courses. This degree of lack of fit may mean that the new items simply do not scale with the old ones.

Equating to IALS international scales

With the above caveat in mind, we proceed to link the results from this study with those of IALS. The problems above may mean that results of such an exercise should not be taken as providing completely comparable results between the two, but rather a general indication of location of performance overall. However, the same tests were employed (in a balanced design) at pre- and post-test, and any scaling is simply a monotonic transformation of results. We may still gain an impression of whether the programme has given rise to any progress.

Tests are equated using the non-overlapping common items design for IRT methods (Kolen and Brennan, 1995, pp.162-7). Where Scale 1 and Scale 2 are two 2-parameter logistic IRT scales that differ by a linear transformation, and O_1, O_2 are values on the two scales, then the O-values are related:

$$O_{j1} = AO_{j2} + B$$

The item parameters on the two scales are related by

$$a_{j1} = \frac{a_{j2}}{B}$$

$$b_{j1} = Ab_{j2} + B$$

where A, B are given by

$$A = \frac{\sigma(b_{j1})}{\sigma(b_{j2})}$$

$$b_{j1} = \mu(b_{j1}) - A\mu(b_{j2})$$

(Kolen and Brennan, 1995).

This is what was done here. Common items on the present study's scale and the IALS scale were equated in this way. Parameters on the present scale for non-common items, and student abilities, were transformed using the same formula.

This was carried out separately for P and D items. Next, a further linear transformation was applied to the P and D scales to calibrate them with the IALS NAEP-based metric ranging from 0 to 500. The values of A, B were taken from Murray *et al.* (1998, p.174).

The two transformations were thus:

$O_{ki} = 51.670_{j1}) + 269.16$ for Prose, and

$O_{ki} = 52.460_{j1}) + 237.50$ for Document.

Corresponding transformations were used to derive item metrics.

Table E.2: **'Prose' Items in 'A' Tests**

ITEM	*FACIL*	*BISERIAL*	*THRESH*	*SLOPE*	*CHISQ*	*DF*	*PVAL*
CBIRD1	0.73	0.58	−0.28	1.79	20.70	5	0.00
CBIRD2	0.69	0.50	−0.22	1.51	9.40	6	0.15
CBIRD3	0.54	0.43	0.29	1.29	20.00	5	0.00
CBIRD4	0.85	0.83	−0.56	2.71	19.80	3	0.00
CBIRD5	0.93	0.99	−0.94	3.09	3.40	3	0.33
COR1Q1S1	0.77	0.85	−0.92	2.19	18.50	7	0.01
UNICEF2	0.85	0.94	−1.24	2.55	8.30	6	0.21
B6Q1S1	0.72	0.90	−0.63	2.73	12.20	6	0.06
SCEGG2	0.85	1.05	−1.18	3.40	8.70	4	0.07
SCEGG3	0.72	0.80	−0.76	1.94	40.50	7	0.00
B5Q1S1	0.69	0.99	−0.47	5.00	12.00	2	0.00
B5Q2S1	0.63	0.82	−0.36	2.65	14.80	6	0.02
B4Q1S1	0.74	0.98	−0.64	3.99	4.20	3	0.24
B4Q2S1	0.35	0.58	0.55	1.79	13.10	5	0.02
CUSTAR1	0.91	0.71	−2.29	1.90	4.10	3	0.25
CUSTAR2	0.82	0.73	−1.73	1.77	5.50	5	0.36
CUSTAR3	0.28	0.21	1.81	0.45	19.60	8	0.01
CQSAND1	0.52	0.58	−0.48	1.15	27.50	8	0.00
CQSAND2	0.51	0.87	−0.43	2.82	7.20	5	0.21
CQSAND3	0.64	0.91	−0.82	2.84	5.20	4	0.26

Table E.3: **'Document' Items in 'A' Tests**

ITEM	FACIL	BISERIAL	THRESH	SLOPE	CHISQ	DF	PVAL
SEEDQ1	0.89	0.47	−1.79	1.06	15.20	4	0.00
SEEDQ2	0.86	0.49	−1.37	1.19	9.00	4	0.06
SEEDQ3	0.74	0.42	−0.78	1.00	15.60	6	0.02
SEEDQ4	0.90	0.64	−1.56	1.35	4.10	4	0.40
SEEDQ5	0.86	0.46	−1.55	1.06	7.10	5	0.21
B2Q111S1	0.80	1.01	−0.86	6.02	18.30	2	0.00
B2Q112S1	0.33	0.54	0.65	1.74	19.50	4	0.00
B2Q113S1	0.80	1.02	−0.84	6.94	3.70	1	0.05
B2Q114S1	0.78	1.06	−0.73	9.33	0.70	0	1.00
B2Q115S1	0.60	0.68	−0.33	1.79	21.10	5	0.00
B5Q7S1	0.51	0.70	−0.01	2.28	134.40	5	0.00
B5Q8S1	0.44	0.53	0.24	1.33	52.80	6	0.00
CALEN1	0.94	0.59	−2.85	1.52	7.70	2	0.02
CALEN2	0.97	0.54	−3.43	1.41	2.40	1	0.11
TELE1	0.85	0.66	−1.97	1.45	76.80	4	0.00
TELE2	0.84	0.63	−2.00	1.35	68.50	5	0.00

Table E.4: **'Prose' Items in 'B' Tests**

ITEM	FACIL	BISERIAL	THRESH	SLOPE	CHISQ	DF	PVAL
LETTR1	0.96	1.00	−1.47	2.66	1.30	2	0.54
LETTR2	0.92	0.77	−1.27	2.09	1.80	3	0.62
LETTR3	0.98	1.38	−1.54	4.10	1.50	0	1.00
LETTR4	0.97	1.16	−1.51	3.25	1.10	0	1.00
LETTR5	0.94	0.79	−1.54	1.93	0.90	2	0.66
B7Q13S1	0.68	0.90	−0.53	3.53	53.60	3	0.00
B7Q14S1	0.41	0.70	0.29	2.46	33.00	4	0.00
B7Q15S1	0.51	0.75	−0.01	2.44	44.80	4	0.00

Table E.5: **'Document' Items in 'B' Tests**

ITEM	FACIL	BISERIAL	THRESH	SLOPE	CHISQ	DF	PVAL
GALLT1	0.78	0.59	−0.52	1.81	4.60	4	0.33
GALLT2	0.84	0.74	−0.66	2.33	8.20	3	0.04
GALLT3	0.89	0.47	−1.44	1.28	3.90	4	0.42
GALLT4	0.91	0.57	−1.36	1.56	3.00	3	0.40
GALLT5	0.85	0.70	−0.70	2.22	2.50	3	0.48
ELCTON1	0.69	0.51	−0.92	1.03	28.80	7	0.00
COREQ2S1	0.83	0.95	−1.10	2.71	3.40	5	0.64
B4Q121S1	0.76	0.80	−0.89	2.00	8.40	6	0.21
B4Q122S1	0.77	0.84	−0.92	2.15	3.50	6	0.75
B4Q123S1	0.73	0.77	−0.78	1.90	3.90	6	0.69
B4Q124S1	0.71	0.80	−0.67	2.16	3.20	5	0.68
B6Q4S1	0.67	0.76	−0.53	2.23	7.50	5	0.18
B6Q6S1	0.58	0.72	−0.21	2.21	6.70	4	0.15
B7Q1S1	0.83	0.93	−1.07	2.96	6.50	3	0.09
B7Q3S1	0.56	0.71	−0.15	2.43	10.40	4	0.03
DUTCHS3	0.75	0.90	−0.69	3.45	5.00	2	0.08
MEETNG1	0.65	0.50	−1.20	0.96	10.40	6	0.11
MEETNG2	0.90	0.84	−2.17	1.95	3.20	3	0.37
MEETNG3	0.96	0.66	−3.37	1.41	0.20	2	0.89
ADVRTS1	0.79	0.39	−2.36	0.75	9.50	5	0.09
ADVRTS2	0.71	0.69	−1.28	1.41	0.70	5	0.98
ADVRTS3	0.73	0.72	−1.32	1.53	3.80	5	0.58
CISLAND1	0.70	0.62	−1.29	1.22	3.30	5	0.66
CISLAND2	0.80	0.85	−1.55	2.02	6.00	4	0.20
CISLAND3	0.61	0.65	−0.83	1.42	4.90	5	0.42
CISLAND4	0.67	0.63	−1.15	1.27	19.00	6	0.00

E.2 Criterion-referenced data

Developments while the study was in progress caused a change in the plan for criterion-referencing.

It was originally intended that a small panel of experts would be asked to reference all 70 items to the BSA's Communication Standards; the task would be eased by the fact that 28 of the items had been either empirically validated against the Standards already (in the *Lost Opportunities* study) or devised to address them.

However, in 1999, when that criterion-referencing exercise was due to start, the government-appointed Moser Working Group on Basic Skills proposed the replacement of the BSA's Standards by a new set. The new Standards were made available to this project in draft in the Summer of 1999, and made the criterion-referencing task considerably easier. This was because of a design feature of the new Standards: some of the boundaries between levels were deliberately aligned with boundaries between IALS levels, as shown in Table E.6.

Table E.6: **Alignment of IALS levels and new Basic Skills Standards levels**

New Standards	*IALS*
Level 2	3
Level 1	2
Entry 3	} 1
Entry 2	
Entry 1	

'Entry 3, 2 and 1' are sub-levels within the Entry Level of the new Standards (the old Entry Level had no such subdivisions). For present purposes, the significant feature of the two scales is that the new Entry 3/Level 1 boundary is aligned with the IALS Level 1/2 boundary; and the new Level 1/2 boundary is aligned with the IALS Level 2/3 boundary. Thus it proved possible to use the scaled IALS values for both IALS and non-IALS items to reference all 70 items against the IALS levels; and then to use the scaled IALS scores for individual students to assign every student to an IALS level (and, by extension, students with scores within IALS Level 1 to subdivisions within the new Entry Level).

The IALS scaled score ranges which corresponded to IALS levels (and the extensions to subdivisions within the new Entry Level) were as shown in Table E.7.

Table E.7: **IALS levels and score ranges, and New Standards levels**

IALS level	*IALS score range*	*New Standards level*
3	276-325	Level 2
2	226-275	Level 1
1	176-225	Entry 3
	126-175	Entry 2
	0-125	Entry 1

With a slight adjustment, it was also possible to relate these levels to other qualification frameworks in use in England and Wales, as in Table E.8.

Table E.8: **Approximate comparison of levels in various qualifications frameworks**

IALS level	*New Standards*	*BSA (old) Standards*	*QCA National Framework of Qualifications*	*Equivalent Vocational Qualification*	*Equivalent level in schools*
3	Level 2	Level 2	Intermediate	Level 2 NVQ	GCSE grades A*-C
2	Level 1	Level 1	Foundation	Level 1 NVQ	National Curriculum level 4
1	Entry	Entry	Entry		National Curriculum level 2

Sources: For the IALS and New Standards levels, Table E.7 above; otherwise Moser Report (1999, Table A2, p.102)

The adjustment to be kept in mind is that the Entry 3/Level 1 and Level 1/2 boundaries in the New Standards are somewhat higher than those in the previous BSA Standards. As Carey et al. (1997, p.16) pointed out, IALS Level 1 included some tasks rated as within (the lower end of) BSA Level 1 for reading, and not just tasks rated as below that level. This is because the IALS levels were not designed to correspond directly to BSA levels. Table E.8 therefore has to be read as though there were a slight downward shift in requirements between the second and third columns, the new and old Basic Skills Standards; this shift may also apply across the rest of the Table.

Appendix F

How the writing samples were analysed

A scheme for assessing the students' writing was commissioned from and developed by Dr Tom Gorman. He directed the only previous quantitative national study of the progress of adult literacy students in England and Wales (Gorman, 1981; Gorman and Moss, 1979). For the present study he developed the marking scheme and trained the small panel of markers; their training included marking a common set of scripts. The main points of the marking scheme are reproduced at the end of this Appendix.

The length of the script in words was noted for two reasons. First, any change in the average length of students' writing would be of interest in itself. Secondly, any change in the frequency of particular types of error in students' writing would also be of interest; but many of the scripts were very brief and therefore could not contain more than a few errors. Students who wrote more, and who therefore had the opportunity to make more errors, would be penalised if errors were simply counted up and reported as raw totals. The way to counter this was to allow for the length of the script; this was done by dividing the number of errors each student made in a category by the length of that student's script in words.

If a script was returned blank, it was dropped from the analysis. It would not have been valid to infer that every such script represented a positive decision by a student not to write anything. For one thing, some tutors may have returned blank scripts where students had not been present and had therefore not had the opportunity to write anything.

Similarly, where it was clear that a script had been scribed for the student, it was also dropped from the analysis. A number of scripts were returned with notes attached from the tutor saying that they had been scribed – for entirely valid reasons, for example where students had a visual or physical impairment, or had wanted to contribute a longer account even though they could not have written more than a few words unaided.

Under Grammar, Style, Spelling and Other Orthographic Conventions the numbers of errors were noted. Results were calculated first for each of these four categories separately, and then for the total number of errors (by adding together the errors in each category).

The Handwriting category was an assessment, on a simple three-point scale, of the quality of the handwriting, largely in terms of letter formation. Since this was not an error category the results were used untransformed, that is, not divided by the length of script.

The NFER Adult Literacy Study 1998-99 – Outline of Marking Scheme for Writing

Code the scripts analytically according to the following scheme. If there is more than one error in a word, code both.

1) *ID*

For each student, enter their 5-digit ID.

2) *Length*

Count the number of words in the script and enter in the appropriate column.

For all further categories, make an entry only if you need to. If a script is accurate/error-free in a particular category, leave the relevant column blank.

3) *Scribed/blank?*

Enter 1 if it is clear that the script has been scribed for the student.
Enter 2 if the script is blank.

If you make either of these entries, *do not enter any further codes.*

For the remaining categories, in each relevant column enter the number of errors you find. (Continue making entries only if you need to.)

4) *Grammar*

This category covered: cases where a sentence boundary which should be marked had not been, or where a sentence boundary which should be not marked had been; the number of errors of clause and phrase division; and the number of errors of grammatical cohesion, e.g. 'writing' for 'written'; omissions of conjunctions; inappropriate use of 'do' and of progressive verb forms.

5) *Style*

This category covered: non-deliberate uses of speech forms; inappropriate uses of non-standard forms; uses of words or idioms inappropriate to the context.

6) *Spelling*

This category covered: misspellings (omissions, substitutions, insertions, mistakes over the doubling of letters, etc.) that involve the misplacement of a single letter, or the misplacement or omission of two or more letters; also phonetically inconsistent grapheme substitutions (in which the meaning and pronunciation cannot be derived from the spelling).

7) *Other Orthographic conventions*

This category covered: errors of word division, word-internal punctuation (apostrophes, hyphens), non-syntactic punctuation, e.g. unnecessary/omitted commas, and capitalisation, e.g. omission at the start of a sentence or in proper names and titles.

8) *Handwriting*

In this category three sub-categories were distinguished relating to the control of handwriting, as follows:

Code 3 if the handwriting was readable, with letters that were largely consistent in shape and form.

Code 2 if the handwriting showed lack of systematic distinction between upper and lower case letters.

Code 1 if the handwriting showed lack of skill in letter formation (e.g. difficulties relating to letter formation, proportion or orientation).

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140